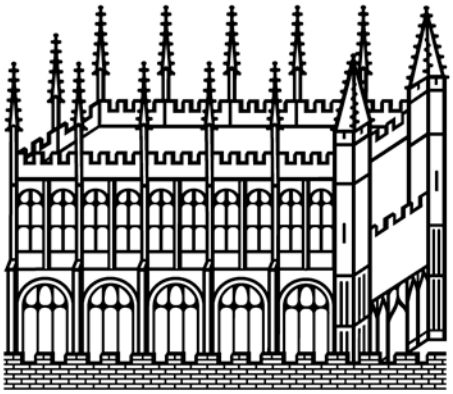

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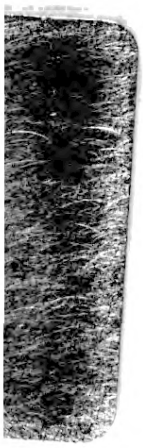
CHILDREN OF LUCIFER

BY : EDOUARD SCHURÉ



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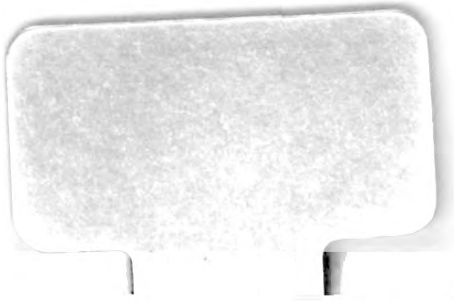

CHILDREN OF LUCIFER

By the Same Author :

LES GRANDS INITIÉS (pr. and publd. by Rider & Son)
L'EVOLUTION DIVINE (do.)

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SANCTUAIRES D'ORIENT
FEMMES INSPIRATRICES
LES PROPHÈTES DE LA RENAISSANCE (Dante, Leonardo, etc.)
LA GENÈSE DE LA TRAGEDIE

CHILDREN OF LUCIFER

ANTIQUE DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS

By

EDOUARD SCHURÉ

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION

by

BERESFORD KEMMIS

1935

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DEDICATION

'To love, and bear ; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates.'

SHELLEY : *Prometheus Unbound*

EDITOR'S NOTE

THE PLAY, dedicated to Shelley, was inspired by the same motif as impelled the latter to write his *Prometheus Unbound*, and the imagery came from the same source (see Shelley's Preface). Their heroes are akin. Schuré wrote his Play in 1900. In 1906 he first met Rudolf Steiner and a close friendship ensued. In 1909, a translation into German by Fräulein von Sivers, later Frau Marie Steiner, was produced as a Play at Munich by Rudolf Steiner, and formed a prelude to his Course of Lectures *Occident and Orient, or the Children of Lucifer and the Brethren of Christ*. These lectures are translated into English and published by Messrs. Putnams under the title of *The East in the Light of the West* (see pp. 9–12 herein). This Play served also as an introduction to Rudolf Steiner's own Mystery Plays which he initiated at Munich the following year and which are now given at Dornach, Switzerland, in the stupendous Goetheanum erected by him for the purpose.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

CHILDREN OF LUCIFER is enacted against the historic background of the fourth century A.D., the period of the great conflict between Hellenism and Christianity ; but the impetuous spirits of the two leading characters break through and transcend this conflict, in their aspiration towards an ideal of Man and Woman which neither History nor Legend nor Poetry has as yet realized—namely a Love that pours forth in a united companionship that is active. In this drama the man embodies the spirit of Hellenism, the woman personifies the soul of Christianity, and their fusion is accomplished by the miracle of Love. That which associates and unites them is an integral and absolute love, at once human and divine, passionate and spiritual, a love fertilizing, redeeming and creative. Both give themselves freely, each of them is submerged in the other, and each is reborn in the other to rise re-enriched, so that they form one single being whose power is multiplied a hundredfold by the two magnetic poles. Phosphoros becomes the conscience of Cleonice and Cleonice becomes the soul of Phosphoros. Thus the action of this free pair is liberating ; and thus they shed around them a new life, and without intending it, beget a new religion. From their radiance the free city is born.

Such a pair, however, cannot long triumph in the

world into which they are born. They are fated to succumb in their daring campaign against Caesar and the Church, and can only affirm their victory by means of their death. Only thus will they bequeath to mankind the testament of their faith under the sign of Lucifer.

Lucifer, the Spirit of Science, Freedom and Human Individuality, is an implacable adversary of the Church in its present form, but he is not an adversary of Christ, although he unfolds himself in an inverse direction ; he is rather Christ's complement. For there is a point at which the man who seeks to become a god coincides with the god-made man—the point at which Science becomes Wisdom by blending with Love.

EDOUARD SCHURÉ

Extract from

The East in the Light of the West

By Rudolf Steiner

. . . The Cross alone gives vital courage and belief to our right understanding ; but the star of the Light-bearer, the star of Lucifer, if we surrender ourselves to it, can enlighten us upon the spiritual ideas within us. That is the other centre of force on which we must take a firm stand ; we must be capable of acquiring knowledge which goes into the depths of life, which goes behind the outer, material appearances, which sends its rays from the place where there is light, even when to human eyes and understanding all is dark. It was necessary for the progress of humanity that darkness should reign for a time ; as indicated in a profound way in the Gospel of St. John. This darkness was illumined by what we call the Christ principle, the Christ.

A wonderfully beautiful legend tells us that when Lucifer fell from heaven to earth a precious stone fell from his crown. This precious stone—so the legend proceeds—became the vessel from which Christ Jesus took the holy Supper with His disciples ; the same vessel received the Christ's blood when it flowed on the Cross, and was brought by angels to the Western world, where it is received by those who wish to come to a true understanding of the Christ principle. Out of the stone which

fell from Lucifer's crown was made the Holy Grail. This precious stone is in a certain respect nothing else than the full power of the Ego. In darkness this human Ego had to be prepared for a new and more intelligent beholding of the radiance of Lucifer's star. This Ego had to school itself by means of the Christ principle, it had to ripen by the aid of the stone fallen from Lucifer's crown, that is to say through Spiritual Science, in order to become capable once more of bearing the light which comes not from without. This light, which only shines in us when we ourselves have the power to do what is requisite for acquiring it, must shine again in the world. Thus people who look at the future with full understanding know that Spiritual Science implies work on the human Ego, which will make it into a vessel capable of again receiving the light which lives in a region where to-day our sight and intellect apprehend merely darkness and night. An old legend tells us that ' Night was the original ruler.' This night, however, is what to-day is filled with darkness. But if we permeate ourselves with the light which rises for us when we understand the Light-bearer, the other spirit Lucifer, then will our night be turned into day. Our eyes cannot see if the outer light does not illuminate the objects round us ; our intellect fails if asked to penetrate beyond the outer nature of things. The star of Lucifer, however, which comes to us when clairvoyant investigation speaks, throws its light on what only seems to be night and changes it into day. And this also takes from us all deadening and paralysing doubt. Then we understand the Cross of the Christ in the star of Lucifer. It may be said to be the mission of Spiritual Science to give us on the one hand certainty and strength whereby, firmly rooted in spiritual life, we may become recipients

of the light of the Light-bearer, and on the other hand to make us lean firmly on the rock of unquestioning conviction that nothing which is due to happen through the interaction of forces which are in the world shall fail to happen. Only through this twofold certainty shall we be able to accomplish what we have to do in the world ; only through this twofold certainty shall we succeed in transplanting Spiritual Science into life.

Therefore we must clearly recognize that we have not only the task of understanding the star of Lucifer, as it shone throughout human evolution till the precious stone fell out of Lucifer's crown, but that we have to receive this precious stone in its transformed character as the Holy Grail, that we must understand the Cross in the star ; we must know that we have to understand the luminous wisdom which shone in the world during primeval ages, and which we deeply revere as the wisdom of pre-Christian times. To this we must indeed look up in full devotion, and add to it that which could be given to the world through the mission of the Cross. Not the least fraction of pre-Christian wisdom, of the light of the East, must be lost to us. We look up to Phosphoros, the Light-bearer ; and indeed we revere this Light-bearer as the being through which alone we learn to understand the whole of the deep, inner meaning of the Christ ; but side by side with Phosphoros we see Christophorus, the Christ-bearer, and we try to conceive of the mission of Spiritual Science in such a way that it only can be fulfilled if the symbols of these two worlds really ' unite themselves in love '. If this is our conception of the mission of Anthroposophy, Lucifer will guide us to the safety of a luminous spiritual life, and the Christ will guide us to the inner warmth of the soul which trusts and believes that that will come about

which may be called the birth of the Eternal out of the Temporal.

And we shall further recognize that there is a light of the West, that shines in order to make that which originates in the East more luminous than it is through its own power. A thing becomes luminous through the light by which it is illuminated. Therefore let no one say that any falsification whatever of Eastern wisdom takes place when the light of the West shines on it. It will appear that what is beautiful and sublime seems most beautiful and sublime when illuminated by the noblest light. If we feel this idea and receive it into our souls, letting it fill them, we shall be able to learn in small things, through feeling and realization, what will come to pass in great matters. We shall say : we stand firmly rooted in our truths and wait patiently for their realization, however long deferred it may be.

Thus we work from one point of time to another in the firm belief that if we comprehend our mission rightly we are working for that for which man ought to work, for eternity. For as far as human work is concerned, Eternity is the birth of that which has matured in Time.

ARGUMENT

IT is a time when Constantine has declared Christianity to be the religion of the world, and the last relics of paganism are being stamped out relentlessly. But the city of Dionysia still cherishes its tradition, in spite of the presence of a Christian Bishop; and the Proconsul Harpalus, has been sent to reduce it to submission. Damis is loyal to his old beliefs, but Phrygius has lost his own kingdom and bows to the inevitable. Theokles (the hero of the play), a young nobleman of Dionysia, a true pagan, returns from his travels to find his City about to be given over to Rome. The Proconsul arrives, and by offering to the people all the pleasure and profit which Rome can give, is received with applause, and Androcles, a friend of Theokles, has to surrender the keys of the City.

A riot, however, has taken place because of a placard signed Harmodius, denouncing Rome and calling upon the citizens to rise.* Theokles tells his friends that he is the writer of this proclamation.

At the suggestion of Lycophron, an old grave-digger and seer, he leaves the city for a wild region of the Taurus Mountains in order to get advice from Heraklidos. Here he comes to the Temple of the Unknown God, where he is initiated by Heraklidos in the

* Harmodius and Aristogeiton in Greek history are the prototypes of liberty.

mysteries of Lucifer and 'the heavenly voice', and is given a new name, Phosphoros, and armed with the vision of 'the Star and the Torch'. But he is warned that he will only become a 'Hero' when a virgin's love for him is so fearless that she renounces her god to follow him.

Thus prepared he sets forth on his travels, and arrives at an oasis of lower Egypt where a Christian temple is kept by the 'Father of the desert.' Here is Cleonice, who has dedicated her life to virginity and prayer, but who has seen Phosphoros, or Theokles, in the market-place of Dionysia. She is determined that if Phosphoros comes her way she will curse him, but the Father of the desert cautions her against her rashness. Phosphoros arrives and Cleonice carries out her threat, though in doing so she relents, and it is clear that Phosphoros has conquered her; but he leaves the cloister never to see her again.

He receives information from his friends at Dionysia that he has been pardoned on condition of his return to defend his conduct, and they warn him that this is only a trick. In spite of this friendly warning, he determines to return to Dionysia at once. Thessalus, an old servant of Cleonice's family, arrives at her cloister and tells her that he has met Phosphoros, who has told him that he is on his way to Dionysia to stand his trial as an enemy of Caesar. Cleonice thereupon leaves the cloister to help Phosphoros in his trouble.

She finds on arrival that Phosphoros is cast into prison, and among his friends Phrygius is hesitating. The trial takes place. Phosphoros in his speech makes no defence but carries the attack into the camp of his opponents. He is condemned to death, but this is mitigated to banishment if he can get one person out of the crowd to say a good word for him. Cleonice immedi-

ately intervenes. The crowd, to whom Cleonice is well known, is loud in its applause, the Proconsul is killed, the Roman soldiers driven back, and Phosphoros is proclaimed Archon of Dionysia.

The Christian Bishop knows that he has the Roman Empire in his support and is determined to work the ruin of the happy pair, who are now married. Soon Phosphoros learns that his armies are giving way, and in spite of encouragement and help from Cleonice, is feeling despondent. Cleonice herself is entrapped by a monk to leave her house in order to meet the Bishop. The loyal Damis arrives with bad news for Phosphoros. Damis is, however, at a critical moment able to release Cleonice, who has been cast by the Bishop into prison, and again the people are turned to favour Phosphoros.

But the invincible armies of Rome are pressing on, Phrygius has deserted his friends, and the Bishop employs the time by a forceful appeal to the superstition and fear of the populace, when he pronounces 'anathema upon the accursed pair'. There are more riots in the City, Phosphoros and Cleonice are separated, the Armies enter, and Phosphoros flees to the Temple of the Unknown God, where he is expected by the old initiate Heraklidos.

Cleonice also finds her way there, but the Roman armies, with the Christian Bishop, are intent upon their destruction. Cleonice is prepared to die with Phosphoros. Phosphoros, in the old pagan spirit, is determined at any rate to fight, and refuses to yield ; but it is borne in upon both of them that their sacrifice in death will be the fulfilment of the greatest human ideal and will help to bring about in humanity a truer Christianity, and they take of the same poisoned cup, and perish.

At this moment the Bishop and the troops enter the Temple, but fall back terrified at the vision of the flaming star and the fiery cross. The Bishop drops his crozier, the troops kneel, while Heraklidos gives the Sign of the Times—the Cross of Christ upon the Star of Lucifer.

CHARACTERS

THEOKLES : later surnamed PHOSPHOROS, citizen of Dionysia.
CLEONICE : A Christian maiden of Dionysia.
DAMIS :
PHRYGIUS :
ANDROCLES :
ALCETAS : } Friends of Theokles.
LYCOPHRON : A Seer.
HERAKLIDOS : A Hierophant in the Temple of the Unknown God.
HARPALUS : Proconsul of Asia.
THE HIGH PRIEST OF BACCHUS.
THE BISHOP OF DIONYSIA.
A MONK.
THE FATHER OF THE DESERT.
AGLAE :
CYTHERIS :
MIMALONE : } Courtesans attired as Bacchantes.
THESSALUS : An old slave.
A SERVANT OF PHOSPHOROS.
THE HERALD OF THE PROCONSUL.
A CENTURION.
TWO HIGHLAND MEN.
A YOUNG MAN :
A YOUNG WOMAN :
AN OLD MAN : } Of the people of Dionysia.

A Spirit in the form of Lucifer.
The Voice of the flaming Star.

Roman legionaries, Lictors, young men of the Dionysian phalanx, Virgins of the Desert, populace.

The action takes place at the beginning of the fourth century, A.D., in the reign of Constantine the Great.

The scene is laid in Asia Minor and in Egypt.

CHILDREN OF LUCIFER

ACT ONE

Public square at Dionysia, a town in Asia Minor. At the back a gateway opening on the courtyard of the Prytaneum. On the left, the entrance to the Temple of Bacchus, bordered with sycamore trees. On the right, a Christian basilica surmounted by a cross. It is night.

SCENE I

DAMIS *and* PHRYGIUS *enter slowly, on the alert as if trying to distinguish something in the darkness.*

PHRYGIUS. Have you seen the Romans ?

DAMIS. Not yet.

PHRYGIUS. This is the square ?

DAMIS. Yes, the agora with the Prytaneum. It is deserted and dark as though it were afraid to see the dawn break.

(*Trumpets sound far off.*)

PHRYGIUS. Do you hear that flourish of trumpets ?

DAMIS (*trembling*). It is they ! They are coming like thieves before daybreak.

PHRYGIUS. Listen, it is coming nearer. (*Another louder flourish.*) How mournfully it sounds in the wan dawn of this silent city.

DAMIS. Every one of these harsh notes stifles some virtue in the soul of these cowardly sleepers. The legions of the Emperor of Rome and Byzantium are about to take possession of the citadel. Soon the voice of the imperial trumpet from the summit of the Acropolis will proclaim the entry of the Proconsul into this town. Then the freedom of my ancient city of Dionysia will have breathed its last.

PHRYGIUS. Such is the fate of cities all over the world. For centuries past everything has bowed before Rome; to-day everyone cringes before Caesar deified. My native town is called Dyrapolis, the city of Jupiter the Thunderer. It stands upon an inaccessible mountain. Of old it was the terror of Asia and the overlord of your city. Yes, eight hundred years ago we the proud mountaineers, descendants of the Galatians, we conquered your city by force of arms. We commanded you as masters, your forefathers paid us tribute of gold and of flesh. Dionysia was the port of Dyrapolis and the effeminate children of Bacchus obeyed the sons of Jupiter the Thunder-bearer. I, son of these ancient kings, I can remember all this. Well, when the legions climbed over our walls, we too had to bow our heads. Caesar's eagles have flown even to the summit of haughty Dyrapolis which had known no other lords than the clouds and the lightning. It is right that soft Dionysia should in her turn abase her body of a Bacchante and her brow of a slave.

DAMIS. Ah! You do not know the soul of my native city, her tragic and sublime destiny. In olden days certainly the noble queen of Ionia, who gave

to the world the thyrsus and the lyre, did wear fetters forged by your forefathers. But Alexander the Great, after having subjected the whole world up to the Indus, liberated our town from your yoke, because a Dionysian phalanx of youths had followed this new Achilles, the exultant conqueror of the world, even to the shores of the Indian Ocean. He remembered that Dionysia is the city of Dionysos the Liberator. We worship Bacchus, the divine Spirit, reborn from the earth riven by the thunderbolt; Dionysos mangled by the Titans, but restored to life in the light of heaven. Our god is not an unapproachable and pitiless master; he is a god ever suffering, ever becoming, a god who moves and throbs in our hearts, a god who dies and is born again like ourselves. Our flesh is his body and our blood is the smoke of his dreams; our souls are the tears of his eyes, and if they are immortal, it is because they have been wept by Him! . . . Our city shares the destiny of its god, which is to give birth in suffering. In turn rich or poor, free or enslaved, covered with glory or with shame, she has never ceased, the world over, to wave her torch aflame like Love burning in the chaos of the universe. She is no city of kings or of the mighty ones of the earth, nor yet that of the wise sages; she is the city of inspired revellers, heretics and rebels; but out of her joys are born poets, out of her frenzy pythonesses, out of her tribulation heroes! Do you know what is the noblest glory of Dionysia? It is to have on her Acropolis, facing the temple of the Winged Victory, an altar always wreathed with flowers and dedicated 'to the last born of the gods'. In our worst misfortunes we always look

forward to some god who will be born or to some hero who will arise. That is why of old our youths, our athletes, our virgins, used to lay their torches, their weapons and their locks of hair as firstfruits on the mystical altar of the latest and loveliest of the Immortals. That is why throughout the centuries Dionysia has remained the Temple of Desire and the Land of Hope !

(*The dawn is beginning to break.*)

PHRYGIUS. Well, to-day it is the statue of the Emperor of Rome and Byzantium which stands on that altar.

DAMIS (*bowing his head and dropping his arms*). Alas ! I know it.

PHRYGIUS. Believe me, there is no other god save Destiny and Caesar.

SCENE II

THE SAME, *then* LYCOPHRON, *a bent old man in rags who slowly approaches the two speakers. He is carrying on the end of a chain a bronze lantern with horn panes, which swings in his shaking hand and projects its flickering beam through the grey dawn.*

PHRYGIUS. Who is this decrepit old man ? By Hercules, one might take him for Charon surveying some river in Hades.

DAMIS. That is Lycophron, a down-at-heel sage. Question him.

PHRYGIUS. What is your trade in this town ?

LYCOPHRON. Keeper of a cemetery.

PHRYGIUS. Well, whom are you, like another Diogenes, seeking with your lantern ?

LYCOPHRON. I am seeking a living soul in the dead city.

PHRYGIUS. Have you not found one then anywhere ?

LYCOPHRON. Nowhere, neither in this town nor in all the wide world. You are all lifeless shadows, larvae without will, fit to people Tartarus, but not free men worthy of the sunshine of Apollo. Were you living souls, you would bear your light within yourselves and would walk by it. But all of you wait to be shown the way before taking a step. You need to be dazzled or else driven with a whip. Shadows of shadows, copies of copies, are you ! Ah ! These stage-puppets ! To act they need the prick of vanity or the lash of fear ! Only strip off your masks, you play-actors, so that your monkeys' or sheep's faces may be seen.

PHRYGIUS. It is envy and impotence which prompt you to speak so, wretched old man ! What have you done, vile Thersites, abortion of humanity, to have the right to insult the noble sons of illustrious cities who would be crowned with glory if the times were propitious ?

LYCOPHRON. What have I done ? Night and day I seek, I haunt the cross-roads, the threshold of houses, the women's apartments. I study throughout mankind the thoughts at the back of their minds. I have the gift of perceiving them. Rich, poor, the young, courtesans, old men, matrons, tyrants and demagogues—I know their secret selves. Oh ! What hideous monsters lurking under those bald skulls, under those seductive head-dresses ! Men and women fear me because I tell the truth. Have you done as much ? To dare to tell the truth, is that not enough to merit a place in the sun ?

PHRYGIUS. That is a trade a man can scarcely live by.

LYCOPHRON. They say even that one starves at it. Men cover the bearers of lies with gold, but when truth appears to them, they stone it. (*Mysteriously.*) That is not all . . . behind the thoughts of men . . . I have sought . . . the human soul, the marvellous Virgin who is said to be winged. . . . For I have a secret to show me men's souls within their bodies !

DAMIS. What secret ? Reveal that to us.

LYCOPHRON. I make use of this magical lamp. When I focus it suddenly on a man's eye at the moment when he least expects it and throw the beam into the depth of his dilated eyeball . . . then I can see, like a faint shadow in a dim halo, a portrait of himself, the ethereal nimbus of his soul ! Ah ! how terrifying these images are ! Never an Apollo, always a Marsyas ; never a Bacchus, always a Silenus or a Saturn. Oh ! What hideous animals' heads I have seen in human eyes ; bulls, goats, tigers, hyenas, boars and worse still. . . . Yes, for more than a century I have been seeking the divine Psyche with the golden wings. . . . (*With disgust.*) But only screech-owls and bats have come fluttering around my lamp.

PHRYGIUS. Oho ! old man with the lantern ! This butterfly chase of yours has made you lame and short of breath.

DAMIS (*with curiosity*). This Psyche, this winged and living soul is perhaps in us two ? Have you looked ?

LYCOPHRON (*slowly raises his lantern to Damis's eyes and scrutinizes them with an old man's tenderness*). I see a white chrysalis. Inside it has pretty wings with delicate colours. It would like to take flight but

cannot, for its prison stops it. When your little soul emerges, beware of the storm which in its passage sweeps poor little butterflies into the ocean!

PHRYGIUS. And I?

LYCOPHRON (*quickly puts the lantern to his face*). Oh! by Pluto! Yours is a black caterpillar with a spotted and prickly skin. It is venomous. A great death's-head moth will fly out of it. . . . Let those beware who touch you! (*He turns away in horror.*)

PHRYGIUS. You foul old caterpillar, get back to your business! You reek of cemeteries and hovels . . . be off!

(LYCOPHRON *moves off softly, without listening, lost in his thoughts.*)

LYCOPHRON. Psyche! the Winged Spirit! When shall I find her?

PHRYGIUS (*shrugging his shoulders*). A madman!

DAMIS. A seer!

SCENE III

DAMIS, PHRYGIUS, *the* HERALD *of the* PROCONSUL.

The Roman flourish of trumpets sounds from near by in the court of the Prytaneum. A cluster of the people gathers at the sound of the trumpet. The Herald of the Proconsul comes forward through the gateway with three Lictors bearing the consular fasces surmounted by axes. It is now broad daylight.

DAMIS. The Herald of the Proconsul! Listen! (*Trumpet call.*)

THE HERALD. Caesar Augustus the All-powerful, Sovereign of Rome and Byzantium, Father of the Nations, Imperator of the Armies, Master of the Universe, the Great and Divine Constantine—to

the illustrious city of Dionysia—Hail !—Caesar Augustus, Protector of the Christians and the Greeks, has resolved to take under his supreme guardianship the ancient city of Dionysos, its churches, its temples, its homes, in order to defend it against its enemies. The legion of Augustus will occupy the citadel. On behalf of Caesar, Harpalus commands Androcles to deliver to him the gates of the city and the insignia of the phratries. Androcles with the Proconsul will ascend the Acropolis and will carry the fire of the Prytaneum before the altar of the latest-born of the gods, where stands the image of Caesar, conqueror of the world. Children of this city, take up your wands, scatter flowers. Ere long Caesar himself will come to celebrate in the Christian basilica his nuptials with the Queen of Ionia. For you he brings revels and games, a thousand wild beasts and five hundred gladiators. All-powerful Caesar to Dionysia : Hail !

(*The people cry out 'Hail Caesar!', the Herald and the Lictors disappear into the courtyard of the Prytaneum.*)

PHRYGIUS. So then, you are delivering to Harpalus the gates of the city, all its powers and the sacred flame of Vesta your protectress ? And it is Androcles, the leader of the Dionysian phalanx, who is committing this crime ?

DAMIS. Oh ! Androcles has a lion's heart in the body of an athlete. But the Senate is summoning Caesar, and the people applaud him. What can he do ? He can only rage and obey.

PHRYGIUS. In his place I should have preferred to perish under the Lictor's axe.

(*The trumpet call and muffled cries of 'Hail Caesar!' are heard again.*)

DAMIS. Listen to those cries ! What can be done with such a people ? (*A bell rings in the basilica.*)

PHRYGIUS. Do you hear that bell ? The Christians are greeting the entry of the legions and Caesar who is to protect them.

DAMIS. That is your funeral knell, Oh, Dionysia ! In my heart I hear your last sigh. . . . (*He bows his head, then raises it with a sudden movement.*) And yet you used to live and to speak to me in that unique friend whose presence shone upon my youth. . . . In him whom I loved and have lost for ever ! (*He hides his face in his hands.*)

SCENE IV

DAMIS, PHRYGIUS, THEOKLES. *The latter wears a purple tunic and a black cloak, on his head a cypress wreath, in his belt a short sword decked with a branch of myrtle. He approaches from behind and puts his hand on Damis's shoulder.*

DAMIS (*turning round*). Theokles ! At this very moment you were in my thoughts ! Is it possible ? You live ? You still breathe ? Elder brother of my soul, my unique, my royal friend ! (*He throws himself on the other's neck and gazes at him.*) In your first glance your whole self comes back to me !

THEOKLES. And you to me. Oh, holy fidelity of men's friendship, the only balm on earth !

DAMIS. Seven years on your travels, and never a message from you ! Do you recall the times when I was sixteen and you twenty-five, when our vagabond spirits would rove through the fields of the Muses ? Do you recall how we would go at dawn, wreathed in smilax, to the grove of Daphne where

the elms murmured beside the plane tree? Do you recall those divine days when we read Plato, when Truth, Justice and Beauty would walk before us like three goddesses in the deep shade of the trees? . . . Do you recall it all?

THEOKLES. Too many torrents have swept my heart since the days when through it the pure stream of my youth rippled.

DAMIS. You have forgotten me then?

THEOKLES. No; but I have been seeking Truth throughout the world. Two austere divinities have escorted me among mankind: Solitude and Silence. The one has set a barrier about my heart and the other has closed my lips.

DAMIS. Have you found Truth?

THEOKLES (*sombre*). At certain hours, in the depth of myself. But when shall I prove her before the world?

PHRYGIUS. And do you not recognize me?

THEOKLES. Yes, you are Phrygius of Dyrapolis.

PHRYGIUS. Once we were rivals in the gymnasia.

THEOKLES. Nay, rather competitors.

PHRYGIUS. When you saw that we could not beat one another, you offered me friendship.

THEOKLES. And together, with the Pamphilians, we went to the wars against the Parthians.

PHRYGIUS. My ambition as a soldier was to become a king.

THEOKLES. And mine to find release from the fetters of my own thought.

PHRYGIUS (*ironically*). And neither of us has succeeded.

DAMIS. But what do I see? You wear a black cloak and your forehead is shaded by the cypress. What kinsman do you mourn? A man or a woman?

THEOKLES. Neither man nor woman; I have no longer any kindred.

DAMIS. Why then do you wear mourning?

THEOKLES. For my unrealized desires, for my soul stifled by the universe, for Truth that is for ever veiled.

DAMIS. Why, then, all men ought to wear mourning.

THEOKLES. They have sacrificed even Hope to their thirst for pleasure. Therefore I wear mourning for them, for this enslaved city, for this world that pines under the dark pall of baseness and hatred.

PHRYGIUS. Yet you have seen the greatest nations of the earth.

THEOKLES. I have seen Babylon, Thebes, Alexandria, Athens and Rome. Everywhere the temples are mute, the gods dead, men's souls empty. Before their idols of gold or iron, men cower like paltry dwarfs. Their god is Caesar . . . and they are worthy of him. Yet my indomitable soul can neither set the world free nor bow to its yoke. Who will foretell me my destiny and that of my country?

PHRYGIUS. Here is Bacchus himself who sends you his train in answer.

DAMIS. Here comes the brilliant Alcetas, with three hetaerae dressed as Bacchantes.

SCENE V

THE SAME, *then* ALCETAS *enters with* AGLAE, CYTHERIS *and* MIMALONE. *They are clad in tunics of fawn, panther and tiger skins, and wreathed in flowers and foliage. They*

move towards the altar which stands on the steps to the Temple of Bacchus.

MIMALONE (*raising her thyrsus*). To thee, divine Bacchus, our offerings !

AGLAE (*pouring a libation from a golden cup*). Here is the juice of the vine to quicken thy heart !

CYTHERIS (*scattering roses from a basket*). Here are the sweets of the meadows to freshen thy forehead !

MIMALONE (*waving the thyrsus*). Here is the thyrsus which summons thee in the dense woodlands. Sweet is thy sleep in death and in ecstasy, O god torn asunder by the Titans, and splendid thy awakenings. . . . Grant us for thy birthday a happy day, followed by a night of revelling.

ALCETAS (*noticing Theokles*). What, it is you, Theokles ? Back already from your travels ?

THEOKLES. Already ? Seven years seem a short time to you ?

ALCETAS. Pleasure knows nothing of time. For me the hours, the days, the months, the years all have wings.

THEOKLES. So you are always happy ?

ALCETAS. Always. Do you remember that in old days you were my companion ? I used to ask only of every day a new passion, of every night a new delight. But you, unhappy one ! You would probe even beneath pleasure after the secret of things. In the chaste hymns of maidens, in the sobs of heartbroken sweethearts, in the transports of courtesans . . . ah ! I still laugh to think of it . . . you loved . . . what ? The Soul of Nature, suffering, dispersed and multiple. . . . You sought . . . who would believe it ? . . . the hidden god ! But, madman, you found him not

. . . and your keenest joys turned into black torments. (*He laughs.*) Are you still the same?

THEOKLES. To-day my soul is erect in my breast, like a Minerva on guard in her temple, awaiting the hour of battle.

ALCETAS. Politics then? I pity you all the more. You will end badly. Look at these courtesans whom I am taking to the festivals of Bacchus, and come with us. Speak to him, subtle pupils of Aphrodite. Haply he will listen to you.

AGLAE (*shows him her goblet*). My name is Aglae. I am Desire. If you drink the liquor of this goblet, a delicious fire will run through your veins.

CYTHERIS (*offers him her basket*). My name is Cytheris. I am Delight. With these roses I quench the terrible flames kindled by Aglae.

MIMALONE (*waving her thyrsus*). My name is Mimalone. I am Intoxication insatiate in pleasure without end. If you follow my thyrsus, you will see a thousand Bacchantes dancing on the hillside of the god, and you will find them all again in one of my embraces. I am as vast as Life and as deep as Death!

THEOKLES. O divine Bacchantes, human blossoms of the eternal Earth, all-powerful in your folly, you who bear scents and pour love charms, you the Graces and the Furies of man, can you quench the thirst which consumes me, can you give me Truth which satisfies, Faith that saves and Action which creates? Can you at least give me Oblivion? If so, I will follow you to the end! . . .

(*They consult silently amongst themselves and encircle him as though to cast a spell on him. Aglae holds out her cup, Cytheris strews roses on him, Mimalone waves the thrysus above his head.*)

THEOKLES. (*He remains motionless, with arms folded and eyes riveted on a distant vision.*) Oh, far away from the naked Bacchantes, where art thou, O my veiled Muse !

(*The three Bacchantes recoil abruptly with a startled and respectful movement.*) The Muse !

MIMALONE. We have no power over him.

ALCETAS. Well, you are not coming ?

THEOKLES. I cannot.

ALCETAS (*aside*). He is ambitious. (*Aloud.*) May Fortune protect you !

THEOKLES. Aphrodite favour you !

(*Exit Alcetas. The courtesans follow him. Before they disappear they turn back once, holding each other by the shoulders, to look at Theokles.*)

AGLAE. How handsome he is !

CYTHERIS. How pure he is !

MIMALONE. How strong he is !

ALL THREE. Farewell, son of Dionysos !

(*Theokles remains sunk in his reverie without hearing or seeing them.*)

SCENE VI

DAMIS, PHRYGIUS, THEOKLES, *the* FATHER OF THE DESERT, *with the* SEVEN VIRGINS, *among whom is* CLEONICE, *veiled.*

The bells and the strains of the organ are heard from the basilica.

PHRYGIUS. Again the funeral knell of these Christians !

DAMIS. Here comes the Father of the Desert with the consecrated Virgins.

THE FATHER (*to Theokles*). My son Theokles, youthful hope of our ancient city, I was aware of your return.

For last night I dreamt of you. I beheld you bathed in a dazzling but lurid light ; and behind you a voice cried : He will be the glory and the scourge of his city ! . . . I know that your soul is upright and courageous. I know your secret thoughts. . . . I know that you are tempted by the Adversary ! (*Theokles looks at him in astonishment.*) I know it and I mean to save you. Come with me to the desert to yield yourself to God. There I promise that you shall find all that you seek : Truth, Strength and Life.

THEOKLES. And to gain that what must I do ?

THE FATHER. You must deny yourself, forego all desire, make yourself nothing before Christ, and become no more than an instrument in the hands of God.

THEOKLES. Then my innermost self, the shrine of my nameless longing, this holy flame by which I live and by which I am a living soul—I must renounce all this ?

THE FATHER. Yes, for the moment.

THEOKLES. Do you not know, then, that this longing is itself a spark from God, nay, that it is God Himself in all His power ?

THE FATHER. Insane arrogance ! Do not dare to insult the Word made Flesh, Jesus Christ, the only God !

THEOKLES. All honour to the greatest of the Sons of God ! If Jesus should return to this world, I would go to listen to His words on the Mount and to adore Him on His Calvary. But yield to you and your regulations—never ! If I refuse to bow before the gods of Olympus, why should I go and cower beneath a cross ? Rather perish for all

eternity than win my salvation by starving my soul ; because a God has died for me, shall I no longer have the temerity to live ? You are wasting your time, old man. You will not intimidate me either by the cord of penitence or by the transports of fear. Learn that I mean to make of the earth an abode of joy, and a temple of beauty for souls that are free !

THE FATHER. Freedom ? It is in the divine mystery of sacrifice. You will never know it, I can see that. . . . You bear on your forehead the fatal stigma of Lucifer.

THEOKLES (*moves towards the Father with sudden curiosity*). Lucifer, who is that ?

THE FATHER. The Angel of Revolt.

THEOKLES. Ah, how I would like to know him !

THE FATHER. Wretched man, he has you already ! (*He steps back with a startled gesture.*) Oh horror, a son of Lucifer !

THEOKLES. Tell me, Father, why is that Virgin veiled whilst the others show their faces uncovered ?

THE FATHER. That is Cleonice, daughter of the Archon Laodikos, the richest and most illustrious Christian of the city. She dares no longer show her beautiful face to the light, for fear of the outrages of the heathen. She is going with the other Virgins to lay the flame of her spirit and the flower of her flesh at the feet of Christ. Only such a fine spirit, such a noble Virgin might be able to save you by her prayers. . . . (*Cleonice, unseen by the Father, moves a few steps towards Theokles.*) Pernicious man, fated to upset the world for our mis-

fortune and your own, you have foresworn Christ to yield yourself to Satan !

(*Cleonice looks long at Theokles through her veil.*)

THEOKLES (*aside*). Is this some mute divinity who looks at me beneath a veil ? This unknown woman has the shape of my destiny. . . . Oh, my vision of the Muse !

(*Cleonice turns away with her arms lifted in a gesture of despair, then clasps her hands for prayer and covers her face with them, sobbing.*)

THE FATHER (*observing Cleonice's movement, turns to Theokles*). Child of the Demon, may God confound thee, and preserve us from thee.

(*Exit with Cleonice and the Virgins.*)

THEOKLES (*gazing after Cleonice*). She is still weeping. . . . How beautiful she is under the mysterious folds of her veil, and what magic in her gestures ! Dread, prayer, sobs, in her all is sublime. And to think that I shall never see that face and those eyes, perhaps the only ones which have wept and will weep divine tears over me ! O Almighty God, why is it that in this world the finest souls are veiled and solitary like islands in the deep !

SCENE VII

DAMIS, PHRYGIUS, THEOKLES, *and soon after* ANDROCLES *with a few of the* PEOPLE.

DAMIS. How wonderful is this Cross that issues from the darkness of basilicas and crypts to the conquest of the world !

PHRYGIUS. The Christians affirm that their Messiah is the only Son of God.

DAMIS. The Children of Israel affirm that the Messiah is not yet come, but that He will come.

THEOKLES. It is right that mankind should still brood darkly over future Messiahs and expect their coming ; none knows when the Messengers of the Eternal are to come, and they would never come unless souls athirst for light were to call them and unless the warriors of the spirit kept watch in arms. . . . (*He falls into reverie.*) But if God has come down to man, why should not man ascend again to God ? That is it ! There are two Words of the Almighty ! The Messiah and Lucifer.

DAMIS (*uneasily*). What is the matter with you ? In your eyes fires are flashing and stars glistening. . . .

THEOKLES (*in a kind of trance*). We dwell in the terrible kingdom of Desire where all men consume each other in their strife for mastery. But beyond the Kingdom of Desire I perceive the radiant Kingdom of Art which shapes its phantoms in the marble of beauty. Still higher, in the centre of the worlds, I see the shining Kingdom of Love which out of the divine Fire moulds living souls in uncreated Light ! Yonder is the sphere of the Immortal Archangels. . . . Oh ! to create like them !

PHRYGIUS. Day-dreams ! Are you mad ? If you want to convince us, speak by acts !

THEOKLES (*recovering himself, very calmly*). Wait and you will see.

(*Loud clamour from behind. A few of the people run in gesticulating.*)

A WOMAN. What a scandal !

AN OLD MAN. What audacity !

A YOUNG MAN. It is the beginning of revolt !

THE OLD MAN. It is the end of the city !

(*The trumpet call is heard.*)

THE YOUNG MAN. There is the Herald of the Proconsul. Let us run to see ! Run !

(*The crowd runs out noisily.*)

DAMIS. Here comes Androcles, the Commandant of the Acropolis.

(*Androcles rushes in.*)

PHRYGIUS. What is the matter ?

ANDROCLES (*with intense excitement*). A sign ! A miracle! A prodigy ! which already is spreading through the city and tossing men's souls hither and thither, like a storm wind that lashes the waves and agitates the ocean ! I was ascending the Acropolis with the Proconsul ; we were marching in the midst of the Senate of the city, accompanied by the legionaries and followed by the whole populace. I was carrying—much against my will, the Senate had so decided by order of Harpalus—I was carrying the torch lit from the fire of Vesta. We were nearing the altar ' of the last-born of the gods ', the holiest in the city, the altar which is supposed to pronounce oracles and which now bears the statue of Caesar. The Proconsul steps forward ; then he wavers and starts back. He has seen some verses insulting to Caesar written in CHARACTERS on the pedestal. Harpalus in agitation cries out : ' The altar has been defiled by some blasphemer, the sacrifice interrupted ; but before Helios has set, I shall have detected and chastised the culprit ! ' I drop my torch, which goes out ; but the people press forward to read the daring couplets and scatter to spread them to the four corners of the city. They are calling out that an unknown god has done this miracle and will avenge them on Caesar ! They

are brandishing wands, palms, swords—while the Romans, spellbound in confusion, stand thunderstruck.

THEOKLES. What are these words which have aroused the sleeping soul of my native city?

ANDROCLES. Here is the Oracle which flames on the altar of the latest-born of the gods:

Ye heroes of our City, ye forebears, blush for shame!
Our proud Acropolis this day forfeits its ancient fame;
Poor Dionysia! once called Queen of all Ionian lands,
Lo now! on the gods' pedestal a pigmy Caesar stands!

PHRYGIUS. Is the author of these verses known?

ANDROCLES. He is a hero surely. They are written in blood and signed: 'HARMODIUS.'

PHRYGIUS. That Harmodius who of old freed Athens from tyranny?

DAMIS. Sometimes the spirits of the dead speak in blood.

PHRYGIUS. Is he dead or living?

THEOKLES. Living . . . I am 'Harmodius'!

(*Damis, Phrygius and Androcles recoil thunderstruck and draw their swords.*)

ALL THREE. He? Theokles!

THEOKLES. Shall I find an 'Aristogeiton'?

DAMIS (*clasping his hand*). Here is one.

ANDROCLES. Here are two.

THEOKLES. We are three then. Three together we can dare, we can act, we can put a world on the anvil again.

ANDROCLES. Place the hammer in our hands and we will strike.

THEOKLES (*to Androcles and Damis*). Are you not the leaders of the two clans disarmed to-day, who used to fight under the emblem of Mars and Apollo?

DAMIS AND ANDROCLES. Yes.

THEOKLES. Drill them in the gymnasia without revealing anything to them. When it is broad daylight, hide them in the underground chambers of the Acropolis. At the first signal of a revolt lead them out and kill the officers of the legion.

ANDROCLES. And then?

THEOKLES. Once free, Dionysia will find allies. (*To Phrygius.*) Are you not the son of the ancient kings of Dyrapolis? Have you not within you the courage, the pride and the spirit of your race?

PHRYGIUS. Yes, surely.

THEOKLES. Act then when we act. Expel the Romans and set your city free. If you do that you will be king!

PHRYGIUS (*aside*). King? That is true.... I might be then. (*He lifts his hand to his breast as if from excess of joy.*) (*Aloud.*) Very well, if Dionysia frees herself, Dyrapolis will follow her example. But the signal—who will give that?

THEOKLES. We three!

DAMIS, ANDROCLES (*together*). What shall it be?

THEOKLES (*walking to the back and pointing to the Curule Chair under the Porch*). Stab the Proconsul on his judge's throne, in the Praetorium, in the sight of the whole city.

DAMIS, ANDROCLES (*following Theokles as though fascinated by the vision of the act*). Here?

THEOKLES. Here! The revolt will leap from mountain to mountain and from city to city throughout all Ionia.

(*All four come forward again.*)

DAMIS. And on that day, like you, we shall bedeck our swords with the flower of Harmodius and Aristogiton.

THEOKLES. Let that be our badge of fellowship. As the naked steel flashes out of the green bough, so the creative will issues from the virgin foliage and blossoms of thought; even so will our formidable purpose issue from the sap of our youth and from the fount of undying joy. And just as this scented bough masks an avenging sword, so at the hour of action let a smile of gaiety mask our terrible intent. The freedom of cities is nothing without the freedom of souls. It is for this that we shall fight. And though we were to perish, we and our city, we should leave to the world an example finer than that of an emancipated city—the indissoluble brotherhood of free spirits. Bodies may perish, swords break, ramparts crumble . . . but the Soul is invincible! Let us be free souls—and we shall be the city of the future.

(*Damis, Androcles, Phrygius cross their swords on the sword of Theokles.*)

ALL THREE TOGETHER. We stand together!

(*The Roman trumpet call is heard from the back of the Praetorium. The three conspirators tremble and hastily hide their swords under their cloaks. Theokles alone stands motionless and calmly returns his to his girdle.*)

SCENE VIII

THE SAME, *then the* HERALD *of the* PROCONSUL *who moves forward with his three Lictors on the stairway of the Praetorium. A few of the people gather before him. At the same moment the High Priest of Dionysos issues from the temple and halts on the threshold. Opposite him the Christian Bishop comes out of the basilica and remains under the Porch.*

THE HERALD. In the name of the Emperor and of the majesty of the Roman people, hear my words ! A miscreant has outraged the statue of Caesar. The Proconsul of Asia calls upon every citizen, slave or foreigner to discover and surrender the culprit. Every inhabitant, man or woman, who gives him shelter or food shall be punished with death. Let him be searched out, tracked down and brought bound to the Praetorium to undergo the penalty of blasphemers. By order of the Proconsul, all baths, gymnasia, circuses and spectacles are to be closed. The taxes are tripled until the day when the people shall surrender to their judge the criminal who signs himself ' HARMODIUS '!

(*Murmurs among the crowd.*)

THE HIGH PRIEST OF DIONYSOS (*under the Porch of the Temple*). The enemies of the gods are the enemies of the city. Their heads do not long stand erect above the crowds ; they fall stricken by the thunderbolt like mighty trees. Caesar and Destiny are all-powerful gods. Woe to those who defy them ! Woe to Harmodius !

THE BISHOP. We render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.

Blessed be the Emperor who protects the Christians. The enemies of the Emperor are the enemies of Christ. Curses upon the sacrilegious ! Woe to Harmodius !

(*The Heralds, the High Priest and the Bishop withdraw, and the people in dismay disperse, murmuring.*)

THE PEOPLE. Harmodius ! Death to him !

DAMIS. If you are detected I will shelter you in my house. You know that it is at your service with all that I possess.

THEOKLES. No, friend ; exile is safer.

ANDROCLES. You know whether my heart is on your side. You know that in the day of battle every muscle of this arm would harden into a fibre of steel. But the times are adverse. Flee, your life is at stake.

THEOKLES. The soul of Dionysia, which but now was seething like a hive of bees, has fallen dumb all at once, and over the town lies a silence of death. If such is the power of a Roman Herald with two Lictors, what will be that of the Proconsul himself, and of Caesar with all his legions ?

(*A man wrapped in a cloak is seen lurking at the back.*)

ANDROCLES (*to Theokles*). Do you see that man ? That is the Proconsul's spy. He is watching us. Beware. Already the shadow of Caesar is hovering over you, and his ever-present hand will close upon you. Your life is in danger, Theokles. Flee ! Flee !

(*The man in the cloak vanishes.*)

THEOKLES. I mean to set you free from this shadow that darkens the universe, from this hand which holds you down.

ANDROCLES. Such an attempt would need more than a man, it would need the voice of a god.

PHRYGIUS. Yes, of a god.

THEOKLES. But were that god ever to speak, you would act ?

ANDROCLES AND PHRYGIUS. Yes.

THEOKLES. Then our pact remains indissoluble till the day of the sign from heaven ?

ANDROCLES, PHRYGIUS AND DAMIS. It remains.

THEOKLES. Farewell, then, until we meet again.

(*Exit Androcles and Phrygius.*)

DAMIS. Let me follow you !

THEOKLES. No, you will stay here. Your messages will tell me what is being said in the city. I will see you again before departure. Now leave me. I need to be alone.

(*Exit Damis.*)

SCENE IX

THEOKLES, *then* LYCOPHRON.

THEOKLES (*alone*). They are right . . . to think, man is sufficient to himself ; but to act he needs the voice of a god. Which is the god who will speak for me ?

(*He meditates with his chin in his hands.*)

(*Lycophron approaches, with his lantern still alight in the broad daylight, and examines Theokles at close quarters.*)

THEOKLES (*starting out of his thoughts*). What do you want ?

LYCOPHRON. Young man in mourning, with flowers on your sword, noble exile, behind you I see hovering a woman with golden hair, wreathed in narcissus, with a strange smile. She holds a dart and a palm leaf and murmurs divine words in your ear. . . . 'Is it Death or Immortality ?' Perhaps both. (*He brings his lantern near Theokles's eyes.*) Yes, you . . .

you have a living soul ! (*He blows out his lantern.*) I have no more need of my light ; I have found what I have been seeking all my life.

THEOKLES. What do you mean by a living soul ?

LYCOPHRON. A soul which acts of itself and not under the pressure of others. Such a soul is unbreakable and may arouse the world.

THEOKLES. If then I am such a soul, why cannot I do it ? Give me the centaur's hoof to master the mountain, and the eagle's wing to reach its summits, and then my humanity will equal the reach of my desire. . . . But I am not even able to breathe my faith into the heart of a single friend !

LYCOPHRON. That is because you do not yet know the highest force of all. Have you ever heard of Heraklidos, the Hierophant of the Unknown God, who dwells in the wild glades of the Taurus Mountains ?

THEOKLES. No.

LYCOPHRON. Go to him. He will make you known to yourself and will unveil to you the secret powers of nature. He alone will make you see the Spirit face to face and commune with the heart of the world.

THEOKLES. How strangely your words vibrate in the depth of my heart ! Who are you then ?

LYCOPHRON. Grave-digger and seer. I bury the dead and show the way to the living. Go to Heraklidos !

(*He goes out softly. Theokles stands still and follows him with his eyes.*)

ACT TWO

TABLEAU I

THE TEMPLE OF THE UNKNOWN GOD.

A wild region of the Taurus. The scene represents a wide porch built against the wall of the mountain. High Doric columns carry the overhanging rocks. Their double row encloses in the middle of the scene a gap forming an entrance ; at the back is seen the mouth of a chasm in the ground. Behind the chasm, a gallery of stout square pillars plunges as far as the eye can see into the bowels of the mountain and ends in a luminous point. This is the inaccessible sanctuary. No statues or ornaments ; the temple is bare and empty ; the naked rock forms both floor and ceiling. Only two gigantic sphinxes, facing the spectator, crouch on watch at the edge of the chasm. The one on the right is white, the one on the left is black. Their wings are outspread. Near the chasm, equidistant from the two sphinxes, a marble altar on which burns a scarcely visible flame. To right and left copper basins containing incense stand on tripods.

SCENE I

THEOKLES, *helmeted, a naked sword in his hand, enters by a gateway in the rock. He halts in the middle of the scene and casts looks of astonishment about him.*

THEOKLES. At last I have reached you, terrible sanctuary! How have I climbed the rocky stairway under the flight of vultures and eagles? In truth, I know no longer. An irresistible desire carried me on its wings, and this sword opened my way. . . . But where am I now, great Heaven? Silence and Terror dwell in this porch, and all around the eye perceives nothing but summits and precipices. (*He turns towards the sphinxes.*) And you, dumb colossi, fabulous beasts, are you the only living beings here? What terrifying and sublime mystery, what monster or what god do you watch over with your outspread wings? Which of you two is the greater, the black or the white? The sombre guardian of the darkness whence none returns, or the radiant messenger clothed in immortal light? (*He advances between thr two sphinxes to the edge of the chasm and stoops over it.*) This is the unfathomable abyss! It descends into the bowels of the earth! And beyond it a narrow track fades into the Infinite where a speck of light gleams faintly. . . . Here is indeed the temple of thy word, the tripod of thy oracles, O terrible unknown God! How often the horror of thy sanctuary has haunted my sleepless nights, and now that I behold it I tremble to the marrow and would flee to the ends of the earth! (*He looks again at the sphinxes.*) And yet I must hear his voice, though it should strike me down at the foot of these columns. But how to make him speak? Sphinxes have ever been silent from all eternity. Their stony eyes commune with God but not with man. (*He notices a shield fastened by its centre to one of the columns of the porch.*) What do I see here? A shield, with letters of gold

gleaming on the brass. (*He reads aloud the following inscription.*) 'Woe to any profane stranger who crosses the threshold of this Temple. Thou who desirest to know the Unknown God, enter not if thou art impure. But if thou darest to call upon him, strike on me . . . once, if only a man . . . twice if a king . . . thrice if an initiate.' (*He reflects a moment.*) Come, my heart, thou hast not trembled before the shouts of the enemy and the shock of arms. Why tremble before the unknown ? Let the hilt of my sword be the forger of my fate. And thou, shield, reply if thou hast a soul. Without fear I strike thee ! (*He strikes three blows on the shield with the handle of his sword.*)

SCENE II

THEOKLES, *then* HERAKLIDOS, *who emerges slowly through the bronze door of a building adjoining the gateway on the right. He wears the white robe of a Hierophant, a golden tiara, on his white hair intertwined purple fillets, and carries an ebony sceptre adorned with a golden lion.*

HERAKLIDOS. You who have dared to climb the forbidden mountain and to pass the threshold of this Temple with a naked sword in your hand, of what god are you an initiate ?

THEOKLES. Of no god.

HERAKLIDOS. You are a king then ?

THEOKLES. Not that either.

HERAKLIDOS. By what right, then, being neither priest nor king, do you dare to knock three times on the fateful brass ? Know that the call of the shield reverberates through the deeps of Being. No power can recall the sound, wave on its course in

the infinite. Its triple signal summons the triple god. If I make him speak for you, he will manifest himself in his awful majesty. How will you a mere mortal, endure his radiance and his voice, you who are neither the king of any nation nor the initiate of any cult?

THEOKLES. It is true that I am no more than a mere mortal. But by the immensity of my desire I feel myself to be a king, and by the terror which my soul has overcome I am an initiate.

HERAKLIDOS. Indeed? I know not which is the greater, your audacity or your arrogance! Are you perhaps some charlatan who believes that by an act of furtive pilfering he can filch the eternal mysteries, or else some sacrilegious reprobate prompted by an impure intent? Approach this chasm. I know some who after a single glance into its depths were seized with giddiness and let themselves fall. Others have been unable ever to forget it and believe that they are falling, falling for ever into a bottomless void. Weigh your strength then and consider. You can still withdraw.

THEOKLES. A man does not withdraw when the desire of a lifetime is staked upon one hour and when he knows that hour to be come. Foolhardy? Maybe, but neither sacrilegious nor a charlatan. I am a man who means to view Heaven and the Abyss before acting and to match the God which he carries within him against the God of the universe. The terrors you speak of do not frighten me. They cannot equal the hell of thoughts which I bear within me without trembling or flinching.

HERAKLIDOS. You speak like a predestined hero. Your name?

THEOKLES. Theokles of Dionysia.

HERAKLIDOS. Who sends you ?

THEOKLES. Lycophron.

HERAKLIDOS. It is well ; I was expecting you. Your words suit your deeds as a sword-hilt the blade ; that is the mark of the strong. You are a true son of Japhet, one of those who walk under the sign of the sun and whom I, heir of the ancient sages, am bound to defend. Now what do you ask of me ?

THEOKLES. To learn my destiny, and to find the path that I seek.

HERAKLIDOS. It is upon you to choose your destiny and to find your path. But I am able to bring forth from the Unfathomable and the Eternal the Powers which have begotten you and the Guardian Angel who rules over your soul.

THEOKLES. Ah ! If only you could !

HERAKLIDOS. I will attempt it. Concentrate your soul in the depth of your heart and do not stir from here till I call. (*Heraklidos kneels, prostrates himself, then kneels upright. Then he prays as follows, with uplifted arms.*) Lord Who hast Thy throne in the Unfathomable, King of Heaven and Earth, Father of Worlds and Souls, Zeus—Adonais, I invoke Thee. Permit that one of Thy Rays be manifested to this fearless one, to this son who ascends to Thee filled with audacity and noble purpose ! (*A white flash issues from the inaccessible sanctuary. Heraklidos stands up again.*) The Unknown God will speak. (*He traces a circle in the air.*) Step into the circle. (*Theokles steps into the middle and stands still. Heraklidos takes incense from the copper bowl near the black sphinx and throws some on the altar fire. A red flame flashes out.*) And now in the Name of the Almighty, speak, Powers

of Heaven and Earth ! I invoke the Guardian Spirit who rules over this man ! (*He raises his sceptre. Thunder is heard underground. A crimson light comes from the chasm.*) The mountain quivers on its base. The columns of the Temple reel. Red flashes proclaim the coming of the Spirit. He is the most powerful of all in the Abyss. . . . (*To Theokles.*) Grasp your sword in your hand and behold !

(*A beautiful figure slowly rises and appears above the chasm. The Fallen Angel is seated on a planet half riven and seamed with crevasses. One of his hands is chained to the globe by an iron ring riveted to the soil by a thunderbolt. In the other hand he proudly raises a torch in the darkness.*)

THEOKLES. Sublime and awful Angel, I tremble and exult at the sight of thee. Every fibre in my body quivers. My Life Force, multiplied a hundredfold, seethes as though it gushed exultantly from the well-springs of Generation and of Eternal Desire. How sad and how splendid thou art, O my Guardian Spirit, my God, my Lucifer !

LUCIFER. Thou hast summoned me ; what wouldst thou of me ?

THEOKLES. To be like thee.

LUCIFER. Try then.

THEOKLES. How can it be done ?

LUCIFER. Believe in thyself and strive with the Eternal with all the force of thy being.

THEOKLES. Wilt thou support me ?

LUCIFER. Yes, for as long as thy faith in thyself lasts.

THEOKLES. Since I have seen Thee, I feel it to be invincible. But why, O mighty Angel, is thy immortality shot through with pain and why does the shadow of death darken thy brow ?

LUCIFER. When God said: Let there be light ! I was born, radiant and proud, of the breath of His mouth. A star gleamed on my forehead. Soaring through space I cried : ' I am Intelligence and Liberty, I am Light ! I will not obey Thee. It is through myself that I mean to be, to know and to conquer.'—' Seek, then, Lucifer, through Pain and through Death ! ' said the Eternal. Then I came near to the heart of the Almighty to steal His fire. Stricken by its splendour, I fell, I the Star of the Archangels, dragging down with me a shower of suns and of demons. I fell into the Abyss upon an accursed planet and the Star on my brow has faded. Since that day I have ranged through space with this torch kindled at the tabernacle of the Eternal, and slowly I am recapturing His universe. Wouldst thou rather enjoy without effort the uncreated Light or attain it with me through Pain and Death ?

THEOKLES. Rather a hundred thousand deaths and everlasting pain than forego a single fragment of my liberty !

LUCIFER. Art thou as strong as thou believest ?

THEOKLES. My whole being aspires towards thee and ascends at sight of thee up to unimagined heights. My heart kindles at thy torch of pride and light.

LUCIFER. It is well. Henceforth thy name shall no longer be Theokles, but Phosphoros. For thou wilt bear my light before men. Go on thy way.

(*He sinks into the black chasm amid red flashes and renewed underground thunder.*)

PHOSPHOROS. He is plunging again into the gulf.... He disappears ! Oh, that moan from the abyss, where millions of damned souls groan and wail without response. . . . Terror seizes me anew. O

Lucifer, my mortal pain is heightened by thy immortal pain ! Shall I be able to endure it and to sustain thy torch ? I have presumed too far on my strength. I feel myself fainting. . . .

(*He reels and backs a few steps.*)

HERAKLIDOS. Beware ! Do not pass the circle or you risk your life The abyss is seething and its fumes vomit forth demons. (*He stretches out his sceptre over the chasm.*) Now hear the *other voice* !

(*He takes more incense from the righthand tripod near the white Sphinx and sprinkles it on the altar. A flame of dazzling whiteness flashes out. At once sweet music is heard from the inaccessible sanctuary.*)

PHOSPHOROS. What are those celestial strains, like the harmony of the spheres, or the incense which comes from the heart of the Seraphim ? It softens the bowels of the rock ; the huge mountain seems etherealized . . . the columns of the Temple vibrate like lyres . . . and the innermost soul unfolds its flower.

HERAKLIDOS. It is a voice from above. Look ! The music becomes light, and the light is about to speak!

(*A Star appears above the chasm ; it is a five-pointed Star of a vivid whiteness with a golden core. It glitters like a sun ; a voice comes out of it.*)

THE HEAVENLY VOICE. Phosphoros ! Phosphoros ! Thou hast the brand that burns and the torch that shines. But to make thee a hero, a spotless soul must believe in thee. One alone is enough. But without it thou wilt be nothing.

PHOSPHOROS. Where dwells such a soul ?

THE VOICE. Phosphoros ! Phosphoros ! To make thee a hero, a virgin must burn for thee with a fearless love

and renounce her god to follow thee. A woman with the seven rays of Glory must plunge into her own heart the seven swords of Pain. Feelest thou the strength to awaken such love ?

PHOSPHOROS (*with a cry of joy*). Yes ! By all the forces of Desire, by the torch of Lucifer I feel strong enough !

THE VOICE. Fulfil thy destiny ! Beware of pride which leads to the Abyss. And follow the Star of Love.... Light is a Voice.... Let its Voice be thy Light ! (*The Star vanishes.*)

HERAKLIDOS. The Abyss has spoken and Heaven, too. The Guardian Spirits have baptized thee with a Divine name. Thou called on them ; they have chosen thee ; henceforth thou must obey them.

PHOSPHOROS. The Torch ! The Star ! When shall I see them again ?

HERAKLIDOS. Thou wilt see the Torch again in the hour of struggle, but the Star will kindle on thy brow under the breath of a divine woman.

PHOSPHOROS. (*Grasps the arm of the Hierophant and cries with passion.*) A woman's breath mighty enough to kindle the Star on the brow of the Warrior ? (*He lets go Heraklidos's arm.*) This woman, thou makest me dream of her, thou bringest her living before my eyes... with her transparent flesh and the passionate ringlets of her dark hair; her eyes fountains of light, her mouth a flower of tenderness and strength. ... (*He shakes his head.*) But such a woman does not exist ! O overbold seer, dangerous prophet, why cast this devouring fire into my heart ? Even the hair of the Maenads and the caresses of the Bacchantes cannot kindle such flames of desire !

HERAKLIDOS. It is with that fire that heroes are forged.

Thy heart is on the anvil. Let the hammer beat and the sparks fly.

PHOSPHOROS (*not listening*). The soul who will believe in me . . . the virgin who will leave her god to follow me . . . the Titan woman born of the love of the daughters of Eve with the Archangels. . . . Where could I ever find her ?

HERAKLIDOS. Believe in thy Star and thou wilt find her !

PHOSPHOROS. O mysterious sister of my desire, begotten of the blood of my travail and the vapour of my dreams, on what height, in what abyss am I to seek thee ? To discover thee I would ransack the world and suffer a thousand deaths. Vast is the universe, but vaster still is my desire ! And yet, Heraklidos, I leave thee with regret. These temple columns where the gods have spoken to me, when shall I be able to contemplate them again ?

HERAKLIDOS. O Phosphoros ! One day thou wilt return here.

PHOSPHOROS. Will it be a day of victory or of defeat ?

HERAKLIDOS. God alone knows. But what matter if thou remainest equal to thyself ?

PHOSPHOROS. O wondrous Sage, thou who dwellest like a lion in the cave of Truth, thou hast shown me the signs, thou hast made to speak the Guardian Spirits who reign over me. In their presence my own soul has risen like a warrior in arms. By revealing me to myself thou hast set me free for ever. Because of that I call thee my Master and my King. (*He kneels before the Sage.*)

HERAKLIDOS (*putting his hand upon Phosphoros's head*). And I, O Phosphoros, I call thee my son. Be the awakener of souls and the trumpet-blast of the

Unknown God in the world of the living. And now to action !

PHOSPHOROS (*rising*). The Star and the Torch summon me ! Farewell !

HERAKLIDOS (*stretching out his sceptre*). Till we meet again !

(*Exit Phosphoros.*)

TABLEAU II

THE THEBAID OF THE VIRGINS OF THE DESERT.

An oasis of Lower Egypt. A Christian chapel of primitive simplicity, installed in the ruins of an Egyptian temple, open to the sky. The scene is framed by two enormous columns with bell-shaped capitals which disappear out of sight. Here and there stumps of pillars serve as seats. On the walls, images crudely painted in the Byzantine style of God the Father, the Virgin Mary and Christ. Colossal images of the Egyptian gods carved in hieratic lines in the stone can be seen rising at the back. To the right, doors built in the wall lead to the cells of the Virgins. To the left, a larger fully arched door-way, with the dove of the Holy Ghost carved in stone above it, leads to the cell of the Father of the Desert. At the back in a niche of the temple where once stood an Egyptian god, the recluses have placed a statue of Christ the Shepherd, carrying the lamb and holding the Cross like a crook. Behind the fragments of tumble-down walls can be seen the tops of gigantic palm trees which overshadow part of the temple.

SCENE I

THE FATHER OF THE DESERT, CLEONICE. *The Father is standing towards the front of the scene. Cleonice comes out of her cell and approaches slowly from behind. She seems to be in search of someone behind the columns of the ruins ; at length she touches the Father's arm.*

CLEONICE. He has not come yet ?

THE FATHER. No, I do not believe he will come this evening. The sun is setting already. My prayers have kept him away.

CLEONICE. Oh, no, I can tell by the anxious throbs of my troubled heart. . . . I am sure he will come !

THE FATHER. You are determined then to see this reprobate, this Theokles, now called Phosphoros, who dares to propagate even in these regions the cult of the rebel Angel ?

CLEONICE. Yes.

THE FATHER. And why do you, a defenceless maiden, wish to speak to him ?

CLEONICE. To abase him before Christ . . . or if he will not listen, to throw a curse upon him which will leave him powerless for ever !

THE FATHER. Beware, my daughter, that is a dangerous mission. You do not yet know all the assaults and snares of the devil. His wiles are subtler than a spider's web, and once he has caught us, he encloses us in meshes of steel. The presence of such men is deadly. Often a single word or look from them may taint a soul for ever.

CLEONICE. Christ is on my side, and I feel the strength to bring this rebel to the Saviour's feet.

THE FATHER. What foolhardiness, my daughter. You bring to your devotion all the passion of your untamed spirit. Be humbler ; I fear lest the contrary may happen and Satan entice you to himself.

CLEONICE. Never ! Jesus, Whom I see in dreams, has clothed me in chastity for an armour and has given me His courage for a diamond shield !

THE FATHER. Yes, if you were a tried saint, but you are only an ardent . . . a too ardent . . . novice !

CLEONICE. Has not the Divine Master said : ' Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believe that ye shall receive it . . . ye shall obtain everything, even to cast the mountains into the sea ' ? Well then, I feel for this overbearing Phosphoros a hatred intense enough to overturn mountains. I mean to abase him before the splendour of my King !

THE FATHER. Headstrong audacity ! You are relapsing into the worst errors of the heathen. It is not hatred but love which moves mountains. Jesus forbids hatred ; it leads to every kind of downfall.

CLEONICE (*with a deep sigh*). Ah ! You do not understand that my hatred for the foes of Jesus springs from my boundless love for Him.

(*She wrings her hands and folds her arms across her face.*)

THE FATHER (*sternly*). Yes, I understand . . . everything. Now that I see clearly into your agitated heart, I bid you flee from the enemy of God. Return to your cell !

CLEONICE. I obey. (*She goes in slowly and with bent head.*)

THE FATHER (*pensive*). She will have to suffer much to become a saint. Happily I am on the watch . . . and the enemy will not come now. (*With both hands he makes a gesture of exorcism towards the desert.*) Let us return to prayer. (*He re-enters his dwelling.*)

SCENE II

PHOSPHOROS, *then* CLEONICE.

Phosphoros enters left and leans against the great column in the front of the scene.

PHOSPHOROS. It is here that Thou art worshipped O Christ ! Before the humble statue with a lamb in

its arms, the Virgins of the Desert come to adore Thee ; and night and day they pour out floods of tenderness at Thy feet. . . . And I who bear in my heart the liberty of mankind and the beauty of a new world, I have not met a single soul who has seen into the depths of my own and who believes in me for life or death ! When shall I have the sign ? When will the hour of action rise in my heaven with the flaming Star ? . . . It will never come. . . . (*Turning with a weary gesture towards the horizon.*) O boundless desert, dusky shroud, enfolding dead cities and buried gods. . . . Towards thee I stretch my empty arms in vain !

(*At this moment Cleonice comes out of her cell. The setting sun falls full upon her face. On noticing Phosphoros, she makes a startled motion, but regains her composure at once and steps forward purposefully.*)

CLEONICE. Stranger, by what right do you enter this temple ?

PHOSPHOROS. The temple stands open, I have come to look at its God.

CLEONICE. Do you know that this God is Christ, and that these ruins shelter the Virgins of the Desert ?

PHOSPHOROS. I know it. But who are you who speak so excellently the soft tongue of Ionia ?

CLEONICE. I am Cleonice, daughter of Laodikos, of the city of Dionysos.

PHOSPHOROS. Cleonice ? whom I met a while since, veiled, in the Agora ?

CLEONICE. The same. And here I am now in safe harbour in this oasis of prayer, in one of the citadels of Christ for the conquest of the world. But you, what is your name ?

PHOSPHOROS. My father named me Theokles. My

destiny and my Guardian Spirit have surnamed me Phosphoros.

CLEONICE. Know then, Phosphoros, that the true God holds you accursed, scourge of the world, agent of Satan ! He will strip branches from the trees to make rods for your chastisement. You have seen signs without understanding them. Voices have called to you, but you have not heard them. Luminous hands have traced on the wall, in letters of fire, the name of the Eternal ; and you have erased the writing with your cloak, flushed with presumption and lust. Christ has died and risen again, and you know nothing of it ! Woe upon you who believe not in the Messiah !

PHOSPHOROS. I believe in myself, and my God is the Outcast Angel who illuminates the world with his torch.

CLEONICE. Oh pitiful presumption ! Oh do you not know Him then—the Divine Sufferer ? You have not seen Him faint under the Cross. He comes to visit us here in the crypt, He the Saviour of the world ; He brings to us the bread of angels and the chalice of sacrifice. If you only knew how beautiful He is ! His body shines like a sun. From all His wounds He pours out the roses of Love and the lilies of Grace. Then I cast myself at His bleeding feet and I weep to be unable to suffer for Him all the agonies He has suffered for mankind ! You do not know Him ? Oh, if you could but know Him !

PHOSPHOROS (*looks at her fixedly, then turns away—aside*). I ought to have met this woman sooner.

CLEONICE. What ails you then, Phosphoros ? You tremble ; you seem agitated. . . .

PHOSPHOROS (*looking at her again and then turning away—aside*). Hitherto I have seen none but lowly maidens, downtrodden wives or frantic Bacchantes ; but this is a woman ! Beneath the living flesh her ardent soul quivers. . . . What a flame burns in the dilated orbit of her eyes ! . . . And in her bosom throbs the heart of the world, athirst for love and sorrow. . . . A woman, a real woman. . . . A woman conscious and complete. . . . Only one . . . and yet that would suffice for the birth of a hero and the renaissance of the world !

CLEONICE. What are your thoughts ?

PHOSPHOROS. I was thinking how happy is your Messiah to be thus beloved by you. I too will be a Messiah ; I too am a Messenger of the Everlasting. I too will redeem men by rousing in them their sleeping souls, the divine spark, the fire which creates. Do you know what curses, what sufferings await me for the fetters that I shall break, for the truths that I am about to sow throughout the world like torches and swords ? Do you know the hatred, the solitude, the banishment, death maybe, in some remote desert more desolate than this Thebaid of yours, where you dwell in vision and ecstasy ? All that awaits me, oh pure and divine maiden ! But you have tears only for your Christ ! Be happy. . . . My blessing upon you ! I desire the happiness of mankind ; you possess it. May you retain it for ever ! Farewell !

CLEONICE (*in her turn averts her eyes—aside*). Woe is me for having beheld his radiant glance ! Angel and serpent in one ! The wiles of a seducer and the candour of a godlike hero. What sublime terror, what dreadful joy steals over me ! How shall I

recover henceforth the peace of Heaven when I think of the desperate warrior, the noble sufferer fighting his way up from the abyss? Through his eyes shines a revolted angel who seeks to overthrow me! (*She staggers and leans against the column.*)

PHOSPHOROS. What ails you, maiden? Why do you bow your heroic head? Why lower as if in pain your black-fringed eyelids over the splendour of your eyes? Oh! curse me once again! Cover me with anathemas, so only I may see those eyes shine for one last time!

(*They look at each other with growing intensity and emotion. All at once she turns away and feverishly lifts her hands to her temples, and then to her bosom, as though stifling.*)

PHOSPHOROS. In the name of Christ, what is the matter, Cleonice?

CLEONICE (*with an abrupt defensive gesture*). Silence! . . . Do not look at me any more! Leave me! Leave me! (*She moves away swiftly and re-enters her cell without looking back.*)

PHOSPHOROS (*alone*). There is the first soul I have ever won! A soul vibrant and strong, which can see and know, a soul capable of embracing the universe; the Woman in the Maiden, the Heroine in the Lover, the Heavenly Psyche in the complete Eve! Never shall I forget those trembling eyelids, nor those tears which fell like pearls of light from her fiery eyes. . . . A silent victory in the heart of the desert, on the threshold of a Thebaid; But worth the rout of armies. What divine force has stolen into my heart? No doubt I shall never see thee more, O Cleonice! But I shall know in my everlasting solitude that a soul solitary like my own, a dweller in this desert, is one with me!

SCENE III

PHOSPHOROS, *a* MESSENGER.

THE MESSENGER. I arrive breathless from Alexandria. The last ship coming from Ionia has brought a message for you. It is from Damis. (*He hands him a tablet of wax.*)

PHOSPHOROS (*reading*). 'Everyone knows here that you are Harmodius, and your following is increasing visibly. Every day we read inscriptions on the walls of the City Hall: "Return, Harmodius; Dionysia mourns her son's absence!" The Proconsul Harpalus, alarmed at this seditious outcry, is planning your ruin. He has publicly repealed the order of banishment issued against you. He promises that you shall dwell unmolested in the city and freely enjoy your possessions, on condition of appearing before his court to justify yourself before the assembled citizens against the grave charges brought against you. This is but a trap set for your eagerness, and your return would mean your death. Beware of showing your face in Dionysia. Stay rather with our friends in Alexandria.

'Your faithful

'DAMIS.'

So that is it? My friends are being discouraged by threats to my life! The germ of my ideas is to be stifled in their hesitant hearts; thus the eaglet will be crushed in the egg. Well calculated, Harpalus. But you rely too much on my fear. It shall not be said that Phosphoros shrinks from

defending himself before Caesar's hireling and before his fellow-citizens. This is the moment to dare, the call of destiny comes in answer to the sign. The hour of action has struck. (*To the Messenger.*) Do you know whether any boat is about to leave for Ionia ?

THE MESSENGER. In three days' time, a Phoenician boat will be setting sail for our shores.

PHOSPHOROS. Let us hasten to the harbour and then away to Dionysia ! And now, Star of Lucifer, lone Planet shining in infinite space, rise in splendour on the horizon ! (*Exit with the Messenger.*)

SCENE IV

CLEONICE *and the* VIRGINS *of the* DESERT.

It is night. The Virgins carrying lighted tapers issue one by one from their cells and go to kneel at the back of the scene, at the foot of the statue of Christ the Shepherd. Cleonice comes out last and stands looking after them.

CLEONICE. I dare not follow them. . . . I can no longer pray ! (*She moves cautiously towards the column.*) Oh that piercing look which transfixed me, from what depths did it come ? From what sea of suffering ? It pierced me to the marrow. Oh ! that agonized look, how it dwells still in me and governs my soul !

HYMN OF THE VIRGINS (*kneeling at the back of the scene*).

Here are some flowers of the valley
That the reaper plucks at dawn ;
Here are some lilies of Galilee,
O Harvester of Divine Love !

Like boughs still athirst
Under the tree of the Cross,
We bring Thee our lives.
Enfold the pure of heart
In Thy pierced side,
O Christ, O King of Kings !

(*The Virgins descend into the crypt.*)

CLEONICE. How blissful they are, the spouses of Christ ! They possess Heaven upon Earth. To think that I was like them, and now burn with another fire. Will Jesus leave me to face alone the terrible Spirit who is assailing me ? Has the Divine Master of pardon and of grace already condemned me ? No, that is not possible. . . . That would be an injustice ! What have they done for Thee, O Christ, these innocent maidens, these lowly virgins ? They have brought Thee weak spirits, trembling souls, which have never felt the temptations of the world, or the lure of power. But I, I have brought Thee a royal heart, brimming with strength, capable of every kind of pride and love, and I have crushed it at Thy feet to share in Thy divine sorrows ! The Queen of Flowers, the entrancing rose, has she less worth in Thine eyes than the lilies of the field ? Lord ! Thou owest me a miracle ! If Thou wilt save me, show Thyself in Thy glory !

(*She moves towards the interior of the dim temple and prostrates herself before the altar. But suddenly lifting her head again she beholds Lucifer in the place of Christ, standing in a shaft of dazzling light, with outspread wings, in the posture of a spirit about to take flight. His right hand holds the torch, his left is outstretched over the bewildered suppliant. The vision lasts a few seconds and then fades.*)

CLEONICE (*hastening back towards the front of the scene*). The Fallen Angel ! Lucifer ! That was his face ! It was he ! Phosphoros ! . . . I am lost !

(*She collapses half fainting on the ground with her head against the column.*)

SCENE V

THE FATHER (*stepping out of his dwelling*). Who is there ? I heard a desperate cry in the darkness. There is someone sighing at the foot of the column. (*He comes nearer.*) Is that you, Cleonice ? Why do you lie there ?

CLEONICE (*raising herself on one arm*). Oh awful and splendid vision !

THE FATHER (*taking her arm*). You seem ailing—beside yourself. Your cheek is fevered, your hands burn. Let me raise you up.

CLEONICE (*lets him raise her and remains wrapt in a reverie ; finally she murmurs in a low tone*). Lucifer ! Phosphoros !

THE FATHER. You are ill, Cleonice, and more in spirit than in body.

CLEONICE (*looks at him in bewilderment as if unable to recognize him, then passes her hand over her forehead and gradually recovers her senses*). Yes, I am strangely ill, and it would be better if I were dead !

THE FATHER. What has happened then ?

CLEONICE. Something incredible and terrifying, enough to make all the temples on earth crumble into dust, but I cannot tell you. . . .

THE FATHER. Why, what is it ?

CLEONICE. Already it seems to me that an eternity has

elapsed since I saw this thing . . . so much has it altered for me the appearance of the world.

THE FATHER. I will know everything and have a right to know. I am your spiritual father.

CLEONICE. You insist?

THE FATHER. I command you.

CLEONICE (*in a muffled voice and still as if dreaming*). Just now I was praying to the Lord at the foot of this altar. Oh I was praying with the whole breath of my being, with the whole blood of my heart . . . and my soul had but one thought—to see Him. All at once, feeling myself touched by a supernatural ray, I lifted my head . . . but there, instead of Christ, Lucifer was standing before the altar!

THE FATHER. Lucifer!

CLEONICE (*with a mysterious smile*). Yes, Lucifer, with his torch and his wings! . . . No, he was not loathsome as you depict him. He was radiant and beautiful like the Saviour, but more sombre and sad. . . .

THE FATHER. Unhappy maiden! Already led astray by the Spirit of Evil, do you not know that the Demon's worst temptation is to assume the shape of the Angel? Until your soul is cleansed I exclude you from the holy mysteries and from the sisterhood. Profound humility, long repentance and absolute obedience to my orders—yes—annihilation of your will—this alone can still redeem you!

CLEONICE (*still in her dream*). Humiliate myself? Annihilate myself? Why not? If the holocaust of my body and soul might serve to redeem him?

THE FATHER. Whom?

CLEONICE. Phosphoros !

THE FATHER. He, who by his mere presence has cast an evil spell over this sanctuary and implanted sinful error in your heart ? No, he is accursed ! Never think of him more ! Already you are tainted by an impure breath ; go, abase yourself in your cell, put on the haircloth and pour ashes on your head. (*He goes towards the back and descends into the crypt.*)

CLEONICE (*who has bent her head under the Father's condemnation, now raises it again. A smile of pity, followed by an inner rapture, illuminates her features.* Phosphoros accursed ? . . . I will go pray for him ! (*She returns to her cell with head erect and as if in ecstasy.*)

SCENE VI

THESSALUS, *then* CLEONICE.

THESSALUS (*an old slave*). O Jupiter ! O kindly Ceres ! I am half dead of hunger, fatigue and thirst. It is here that Cleonice dwells with the Virgins of the Desert. She alone can save me. I will await her ! . . . (*He squats near the column and falls asleep. Dawn breaks.*)

CLEONICE (*issuing from her cell*). Already dawn ? A prophetic gleam illuminates the ashes of the desert . . . and in my heart a new day is rising. But what is this marvellous star that pierces the red dawn ? It glitters like an amethyst under a veil of purple. Is it not the one of which the prophet has said : 'Why hast thou fallen from Heaven, fiery star, thou who wast so brilliant at thy rising ?' It is the gem of thy crown, proud Angel of Revolt

and Sorrow. But yonder it reascends, flaming like an emerald to meet the radiance of day. . . . I love you, Phosphoros, in your sadness and beauty, you who bring light into the world! Ah! pitiless Father, you will prevent me from loving freely? You know not then, that a heart invaded by triumphant love becomes untamable, because it is inhabited by a god? Christ is happy in His Heaven, but Phosphoros is suffering on earth. Let others immolate themselves at Jesus' feet to save their trembling souls. As for me, I will forfeit mine to redeem the one who is Accursed!

THESSALUS (*awakening and standing up*). Do you recognize me, Cleonice?

CLEONICE. What, Thessalus! My father's slave!

THESSALUS. Yes, old Thessalus who nursed you as an infant in his arms. Your father, when he became a Christian, had promised to free me. But one day when I was going to the temple of Bona Dea to be healed of my diseases, he sold me to some Syrian merchants. They carried me off in a caravan bound for Thebes, and then cast me out by the wayside because I was too old and feeble. Then I learned that you, Cleonice, the holy maiden, dwelt in this Thebaid. There are ewes and goats in this oasis. Let the Father of the Desert take me as a shepherd. O my dear mistress, intercede for your old servant!

CLEONICE. Who told you that I was here?

THESSALUS. A countryman of yours named Phosphoros, who is travelling in these parts.

CLEONICE. Where did you see him?

THESSALUS. Quite near here. He told me that he was returning to his native city to appear before the

tribunal of the Proconsul. It is said that he is an enemy of Caesar and is in danger of being condemned to death.

CLEONICE. To death? He? That shall not be. Listen, Thessalus. Are you willing to take me back to Dionysia?

THESSALUS. Surely, if you will take me into your service! But how can we leave this accursed country?

CLEONICE. You will see. Wait for me a moment. (*She goes into her cell and returns immediately wrapped in an ample grey cloak, with a casket of cedarwood under her arm.*) Here is all that I have kept of my wealth. But this box is full of gems and precious stones. It is my whole inheritance. With this treasure I intended to build a convent for the daughters of the Lord; now I will use it to save Phosphoros!

THESSALUS (*opening the casket and looking into it greedily*). By Pluto! What wonderful things! When shall we leave?

CLEONICE. Instantly.

(*The Virgins and the Father of the Desert are seen issuing from the crypt at the back of the scene and gathering in front of the altar at the feet of Christ the Shepherd. The Virgins kneel down and resume the singing of the hymn already given. The Father remains standing behind them, his arms outstretched over his flock, and his back towards the audience, till the end of the scene.*)

HYMN OF THE VIRGINS.

Here are some flowers of the valley
That the reaper plucks at dawn,
Here are some lilies of Galilee,
O Harvester of Divine Love! . . .

(*As soon as the Virgins appear, Cleonice pushes Thessalus behind a column.*)

CLEONICE. We must hide! (*During the hymn.*) In spite of myself I feel a pang at parting from them. Farewell, beloved hymns. . . . Sweet ecstasies, gentle peace of the Thebaid. . . . But now I must live no longer in a safe harbour but rather on the stormy waves. (*To Thessalus.*) They might see us, let us away! My nostrils long for the sea-spray and my eyes for Ionia's shores!

THESSALUS. Have you no fear to travel with only a poor old slave as your protector?

CLEONICE. No, I no longer dread the lions of the desert, and I laugh at the furies of the ocean.

THESSALUS (*superstitiously*). Why then, is some god watching over you?

CLEONICE. Yes Thessalus, a god stronger than the rage of mobs and bolder than the sayings of prophets—a god who defies infamy, outrage and death . . . and the name of this god is Eros, Love, the Creator and Sovereign of the world! (*She pulls Thessalus after her. Exeunt both hastily.*)

ACT THREE

Same setting as in Act I. The agora of the city of Dionysia. To the left the Temple of Bacchus; to the right the Christian basilica. At the back the Prytaneum converted into the Praetorium of the Proconsul. Under its porch a Curule Chair in marble.

SCENE I

CLEONICE, *veiled, in a grey cloak,* THESSALUS; *soon afterwards the* MAIDENS *in mourning,* LYCOPHRON, *a few* PEOPLE, *the* HIGH PRIEST *of Dionysos, a* WOMAN, *a* YOUNG MAN *and an* OLD MAN.

CLEONICE (*throwing back her veil*). What a cloud of anguish darkens the air of this city! Over the houses and countenances of men hovers the livid gleam of Destiny, the relentless master of gods and men. Who will ever be able to lift its weight? (*To Thessalus.*) But Phosphoros, where is he?

THESSALUS. Yonder in the dungeons of the City Hall. He surrendered himself, unhappy man! What madness!

CLEONICE. I know why. He has come to face his destiny. He would rather perish than stay away when summoned. When is the judgment?

THESSALUS. I know not. Hush! Here is a train of mourners.

(*Cleonice veils her face under her cloak.*)

(*Six maidens in black veils carrying olive branches, followed by a few of the people, including Lycophron, approach the Temple of Bacchus and prostrate themselves before the altar.*)

THE LEADER OF THE MAIDENS. O God of this city, mighty Bacchus, look on us virgins suppliant before Thine altar and deign to hear us as we weep in desolation. One of the noblest sons of the city is about to face a terrible judgment. The Lictor's axe, sharpened by Nemesis, is ready in the shadow, and the sword of wrathful Caesar is suspended above us like the thunderbolt slumbering in the bosom of the storm-cloud. Our souls are aquiver like sycamore leaves and the stream of our tears is shed at Thy feet like dew. Dionysos ! Come to the aid of Thy children !

THE MAIDENS IN UNISON. Dionysos, come to the aid of Thy children !

THE HIGH PRIEST (*coming out of the Temple*). Maidens of the city of Dionysos, I have heard your supplications, and I come to you full of concern and of hope. I bring you the very words of the God. Hear what he spake this morning by the mouth of a blind prophet.

THE PEOPLE. An oracle ! Hear the oracle !

THE HIGH PRIEST. 'The city of Dionysos is tainted by a sacrilege. A hero alone can remove it. Dionysos promises to his children a hero and a god ! But for their advent a miracle is needed . . . a miracle in the sight of the whole city . . . a miracle dazzling like the light of the sun which outshines the stars ! . . .'

(*The Woman, the Young Man and the Old Man gather into a group.*)

THE WOMAN. Who is the author of the sacrilege?

THE OLD MAN. It is Phosphoros.

THE YOUNG MAN. No, Phosphoros is the hero.

THE OLD MAN (*nodding his head*). He will be condemned.

THE YOUNG MAN (*to Lycophron*). What do you think about it, O seer?

LYCOPHRON. A true hero wears a star on his brow. Tear the scales from your eyes and you will see him.

THE LEADER OF THE MAIDENS. O Dionysos, god rent asunder by the Titans and reborn daily in living souls, thou who stirrest in the depths of the earth, as in the womb of wives when they conceive sons in thine image, thou who createst men with thy tears and gods with thy smile . . . give us him who fights and him who saves . . . give us the hero and the god!

THE MAIDENS (*in unison*). Give us the hero and the god!

THE HIGH PRIEST. Come into the Temple to pray during the judgment. (*The maidens and the leader enter the Temple with the High Priest.*)

CLEONICE (*standing apart*). The judgment approaches! . . . O Heaven, what is to be done?

THE YOUNG MAN. What god did the oracle mean?

THE OLD MAN. Is it Caesar?

THE WOMAN. Is it Christ?

LYCOPHRON. The oracle speaks of a new god.

THE OLD MAN. What name do you give him?

LYCOPHRON. The name comes only with the act. Strange are the words of the prophet, but stranger still will their fulfilment be.

THE OLD MAN. Never shall we hear anything plain from this seer!

THE WOMAN. Let us go to consult the Bishop. He will explain to us.

THE OLD MAN. Let us go ! We are Christians after all.

(*The three, followed by a few of the people, move towards the basilica.*)

SCENE II

CLEONICE, THESSALUS, LYCOPHRON, *the* OLD MAN, *the* WOMAN, *the* YOUNG MAN, PEOPLE.

THE OLD MAN. Shepherd of the Flock of the Faithful, in the name of Christ, come forth from your sanctuary. The city is in distress and the people call upon you.

(*A bell sounds within the basilica.*)

THE PEOPLE. In the name of Christ, the people call upon you.

(*The bell rings again.*)

THE BISHOP (*coming out of the porch*). I am here. What is it ?

THE OLD MAN. Most Holy Bishop, our fellow-citizen Phosphoros is about to face a judgment. He is charged with conspiracy against Caesar and the worst outrages await him. Nevertheless, the voice of Dionysos promises us a miracle and a Redeemer. Who is this Redeemer ? You must know, you who hold the secret of the only truth.

THE BISHOP. How can you come to speak to me of the falsehoods of Dionysos ? Do you not blush for shame, you who call yourselves Christians, that you still frequent the haunts of the devil ? Ah ! As long as it stands, that den of perdition, that

Temple of Bacchus, it will taint the city with the breath of lust and insurrection. You speak of a Saviour? There is no other but Jesus Christ. You speak of a miracle? Christ alone can perform such through His apostles and His Church. Know that in this town this crozier alone can perform them. You who come to me stained with the dregs of Bacchus and the pestilences of Venus, infamous people, I exclude you from the sacraments. Away from here!

THE PEOPLE (*dismayed*). He curses us!

THE BISHOP. Or else promise repentance!

THE PEOPLE. We promise it.

THE BISHOP. Listen to me then. (*He comes down the steps of the basilica.*) Approach . . . nearer . . . but do not raise those insolent heads . . . (*threatening them with the crozier*). Bow yourselves to the earth like the vile sinners that ye are. (*Men and women form a circle around the Bishop, with bowed heads and strained attention. The Bishop resumes in muffled and hissing tones, sometimes whispering into the ears of his listeners.*) Phosphoros is convicted not only of outrage against Caesar but of criminal intercourse with the demon. He has visited, in the Taurus, the mountain of the Magicians who call up Satan. Only the sons of Lucifer return from it; the others fall headlong into unknown abysses. Further he has seduced a holy virgin and torn her from her Thebaid . . . and none knows what has become of her. (*The people react with gestures of amazement and horror.*) Such is your hero, Theokles the apostate, Phosphoros the hireling of the devil. But he is about to appear before the tribunal of the Proconsul. He will have to abase himself, to confess

his crimes and to crawl in the dust to the cross of my basilica. Then, by God's grace, it is I who will perform the miracle, I will obtain pardon for him. The Proconsul will listen to me, for my influence with Caesar is great. But should Phosphoros be obdurate, should he defy Caesar and Holy Church, then you must cry : 'Death to him ! ' That is the only thing that can still save you from eternal perdition. Have you understood ?

(*The people start back in terror. The Bishop solemnly ascends the steps of the Church and turns round under the porch. With outstretched crozier he pronounces the following with the intonation of an officiating priest*) :

On that condition I promise you pardon for your sins, admission to the sacraments and my priestly blessing.

(*The crowd disperses slowly, cowed and with gestures of dejection. The* WOMAN, *the* YOUNG MAN *and the* OLD MAN *go off last, turning several times to point with frightened gesture at the porch.*)

LYCOPHRON (*aside*). What end do the sacraments serve in the hands of oppressors ? Only to stifle men's souls and to kill their consciences. (*Exit.*)

CLEONICE. They are all against him. Against him, Caesar with his soldiers, and the whole Empire ; against him, the Bishop who has the people in the hollow of his hand. They are about to crush the man, the outcast, who wears a star on his agonized brow ! I see the judge approach. . . . Behind him an innumerable army . . . and in this sea of men bristling with pikes, not one lance, not one sword which is not aimed at the heart of Phosphoros ! O Almighty Lord, where is Thy fire and Thy whirlwind to sweep away the mountain of iron and

consume the army of hatred? . . . How can I do it? Did not the risen Christ descend into hell to save the damned? And I, risen again through Love, shall I not have the strength to save my Hero? Help me, powers of Heaven who rain down multitudes of souls through space and who scatter over the earth the seed of free men! Be with me, divine Love, make of my heart a rock of diamond to bear all blows, and of my arms, two flames to burst all bonds and deliver him I love!
(*She remains with outstretched arms as though in a trance.*)

THESSALUS. Here come armed men. We might be discovered. Come, let us hide with your sister Cadmea.
(*Exit, drawing her after him.*)

SCENE III

Enter in haste DAMIS, PHRYGIUS, ANDROCLES, *conversing in hushed tones and to an agitated rhythm.*

ANDROCLES (*to Damis*). Have you followed my orders?

DAMIS. At all the gates of the city there are groups of twenty men hidden in houses. They have trusty leaders, and at the first signal will fall upon the legionaries who guard the city. And you, have you planned the surprise attack on the Acropolis?

ANDROCLES. The phalanx has occupied the underground chamber, and is ready to lay hands on the alien guards. But all depends on the first stroke. Once the Proconsul has fallen the people will rise, the guard will be intimidated and the revolt spread as if on wings.

DAMIS. At what moment must we strike ?

ANDROCLES. When he pronounces the death sentence on Phosphoros.

PHRYGIUS. But can you be certain of reaching the Proconsul, surrounded by his guards who keep watch over him with Argus eyes ? It would need a miracle to accomplish this stroke of audacity. And the people are waiting for it and will not follow us without it.

ANDROCLES. It is our task to bring about the miracle by striking home at the right moment.

PHRYGIUS. Before our swords have entered his breast, a hundred pikes will have pierced our own. Once we are dead, who will raise the town ? Who will proclaim the freedom of Ionia ?

DAMIS. Are you trying to undermine our enterprise ?

ANDROCLES. It would mean certain ruin for us to draw back now !

PHRYGIUS. I require a sign from Heaven. Without it, I shall not move.

(*Trumpet call in the Praetorium.*)

ANDROCLES. Hush ! Here comes the Proconsul !

SCENE IV

The PROCONSUL HARPALUS *comes forth from the Praetorium, preceded by his Lictors and Herald. He takes his seat on the Curule Chair, at the head of the stairway. Behind him, under the portico, at the back, the legionaries form a barrier. From all sides the* PEOPLE *pour in and fill the Agora. Amid the throng the* YOUNG MAN, *the* WOMAN *and the* OLD MAN *form a group apart.* ALCETAS *arrives with the three courtesans* AGLAE, CYTHERIS, MIMALONE, *attired as*

Bacchantes. They sit down to the right, on the steps of the Temple of Dionysos. The seer LYCOPHRON, *bent over a knobby stick, places himself at their feet. From the right,* CLEONICE, *her face screened behind the hood of her cloak, appears beneath the porch of the basilica. The three conspirators,* DAMIS, ANDROCLES, PHRYGIUS, *occupy the centre of the scene.*

ALCETAS. A judgment is the finest of all spectacles. We are going to have some fun.

AGLAE (*ironically*). Let us see whether the son of Dionysos is still as handsome. . . .

CYTHERIS (*disdainfully*). Still as pure. . . .

MIMALONE (*bitterly*). Still as strong ! . . .

AGLAE. Under the Lictors' rods haply he may regret my goblet. . . .

CYTHERIS. . . . my roses that he rejected. . . .

MIMALONE. . . . and my magic wand !

(*From the back three Lictors lead in Phosphoros, bareheaded, wearing his sword. They stand with him on the Proconsul's right.*)

DAMIS. There he is. . . . How pale he looks !

ANDROCLES. He is unmoved.

PHRYGIUS. He is cowed.

CLEONICE (*leaning against the pillar of the porch*). I feel ready to faint !

(*A murmur of emotion runs through the assembly.*)

THE HERALD. Silence, all you in the square ! The Proconsul is about to speak !

HARPALUS (*seated in his Praetor's chair*). Theokles, son of Agathon, you were one of the privileged children of this city, you were rich and free, dowered with all the gifts of mind and fortune. You might have become the chief citizen of illustrious Dionysia, aye, even one of the highest in the Empire, had you but

been willing to obey the twin powers instituted by God for the governance of the earth : Caesar and the Church. Your father was a noble magistrate, your mother a god-fearing woman. But your perverse soul seems to have been conceived in some wild highland cave by a Phrygian Bacchante and the demon of the storm. From your early years pride dwelt in your untamable heart. You have never consented to bow your head before the Cross of Christ, the Lord of Heaven, nor before the august images of Caesar, lord of the world. You have held aloof from the court of Byzantium and refused to pay homage to the Emperor. If you frequented pagan temples, it was only to seek there weapons against us. No god found favour in your sight. Poor demented wretch, you thought to be yourself God and Caesar ! . . . Your travels have been nothing but one long conspiracy. For seven years you have roamed the world with some mysterious purpose . . . and no one knows why. In Chaldea, and in Egypt you gave yourself up to the satanic rites of black magic. You have wandered from riotous Alexandria to venerable Athens, and entered as an enemy into Rome, the Eternal City, founded for the eternal power. Everywhere, in the arenas of athletes, under the porticos of the philosophers, by the fireside of malcontents, you have fomented doubt, resistance and revolt. The eye of Caesar, which sees all, followed you ; his clemency spared you still. But after your return to your native town, what is your first act ? A monstrous crime. At night, with a jar containing a devilish liquid mingled with your own blood, you have been seen tracing letters under Caesar's statue.

Next day the whole city, struck with horror and dismay, read the sacrilegious verses signed 'HARMODIUS'!—Wherefore I, Harpalus, Proconsul of Caesar and your judge, I charge you with the crime of high treason. Defend yourself now and rely no longer but on the mercy of Caesar; consider that your life is in my hands. Look around you! Behold this court bristling with pikes and this terrified city—upon which you would like to draw down the wrath of heaven. The Crozier and the Axe are raised against you; the Church and the City accuse you; Caesar questions you. Answer, you who are named Phosphoros.

PHOSPHOROS. I will not plead for myself! How could I lower myself to defend my life when it depends on a word from your lips or a sign from your hand! I have yielded it in advance to your Lictors. But to my last breath I will plead for my country; I will sing a funeral dirge in honour of Dionysia! Ever free since the heroic ages until to-day, Dionysia was once the ally of the people which calls itself the People-King, but was never the subject of Rome. The Dionysian phalanx fought of its own free will for Alexandria and refused its aid to Julius Caesar, who respected its refusal. Neither Tiberius nor Nero—those monsters—durst violate its liberties; neither Trajan nor Marcus Aurelius—those sages—tried to do so. The fasces of the consuls were lowered before our gate; the eagles of the legions saluted our Acropolis from afar. It is only your Christian Emperor who has tried to reduce this town to slavery under the pretext of safeguarding his Church. There are to be no more archons, no more clans, no more consecrated phalanxes. Has

Dionysia ever withheld anything of its greatness, of its treasures? No; she has given everything, the poor fallen city which was once warrior and pythoness. She has yielded everything to Caesar; her walls, her lands, her houses and her temples. But there remained to her one unstained marble, one altar, one holy place, always decked with flowers, locks of women's hair and trophies of the young men. Dionysia could still say to the other cities of the universe: 'To you wealth and power, the golden treasure of mountains and the clamour of the legions: to you joyous festivals and triumphal marches on the capitol. But I have kept Hope; for I watch by the altar of the last-born of the gods!' —Ah! But insatiable Caesar was jealous even of Hope. To ensure that she should never revive, he has erected his own idol on the holy altar.... Yet the soul of Dionysia, Mother of the Heroes and Muses, was not willing to die without having uttered her cry against this sacrilege. It is I, the last of her sons, who have uttered this cry. Yes! It is I who sign myself, with all my blood, Harmodius. I prefer to die under that name; all the others I cast from me!

HARPALUS. You have said enough to deserve your condemnation and too much for my patience. But where are your accomplices?

PHOSPHOROS. Would to God that I had any! Look at this dumb city and these livid countenances. Do they look like the faces of conspirators? Rejoice, Harpalus, and triumph to the full. I am alone in defying you. I should have accomplices if I had brothers in spirit... but I have none.

HARPALUS. You have some and I will know them! Hear then my sentence.

VOICES AMONG THE PEOPLE. Mercy! Mercy for Phosphoros!

THE HERALD. Silence! Hear the judgment!

HARPALUS. By your outrages against almighty Caesar you have merited death a hundredfold. I therefore deprive you of your title of Roman citizen and sentence you to perish by the Lictors' axes on the Acropolis at the feet of Caesar whom you have insulted, after having been scourged with rods before your fellow-citizens . . . (*Murmurs of indignation in the crowd.*) . . . unless a friend should be found to share your fate. In that case Caesar—for it is he who wills it thus—commutes the death penalty to exile for life among the Scythians. Come now, Orestes, plead your cause and let us see whether you have a Pylades.

DAMIS (*to Androcles and Phrygius*). I will not desert him! . . . If you do not kill Harpalus, I shall follow Phosphoros.

PHRYGIUS. Poor fool! Do you not see that it is a trap of the Proconsul to discover the confederates?

ANDROCLES. Then let us strike! Now is the moment!

PHRYGIUS. No! The legionaries are watching us and the people will not follow us. Let us wait.

THE HERALD. Is there anyone in the city who is willing to follow Theokles into banishment? Let him come forward!

(*The three conspirators cling together as if in consultation. Phrygius holds back Damis and Androcles, who with their hands on their sword hilts, are about to spring forward.*)

HARPALUS. Citizens of Dionysia, I call you to witness that Theokles, the enemy of Caesar, has not found a single friend to follow him into banishment.

Courage, Harmodius, call upon your guardian spirit. Now Lictors bind him and strike !

(*The Lictors bind Phosphoros's hands behind his back, force him to his knees and raise their rods to strike. A shudder runs through the crowd. Cleonice, throwing off her hood and cloak, rushes forward to the platform, tears the rods from the Lictors' hands and cries out*) :

CLEONICE. Hold, wretches ! (*turning towards the Pro-consul and the people*). If there is none amongst you to defend the only free spirit in the city, I, Cleonice of Dionysia, I am ready to follow him into exile or to die with him !

(*She takes Phosphoros's head in her hands and kisses him on the forehead. Then she cuts his bonds with a dagger. Everybody remains stupefied.*)

PHOSPHOROS (*stands up and remains a moment thunderstruck*). Cleonice ! My Cleonice ! What baptism of fire has touched my forehead, already cold with death ? It needed your lips to restore me to life !

(*Great excitement among the crowd, which breaks into louder and louder clamour.*)

THE WOMAN. A miracle ! A miracle !

THE OLD MAN AND THE YOUNG MAN. The promised Hero !

VOICES IN THE CROWD. The Virgin of the Desert !

OTHER VOICES. Phosphoros ! Cleonice ! Cleonice ! Phosphoros !

ALL. A miracle ! A miracle ! Let us haste to their rescue !

PHOSPHOROS (*drawing his sword*). Harmodius is alive ! To my help, all his friends !

HARPALUS (*rising, to the Lictors and the legionaries*). Strike down the guilty !

DAMIS, ANDROCLES, PHRYGIUS (*throw themselves with*

drawn swords on Harpalus, crying). Death to the Proconsul !

(*Harpalus falls back, mortally wounded, on his chair.*)

PHOSPHOROS (*who has stood still before Harpalus, with sword upraised to heaven*). The soul of Dionysia avenges herself. Hail to her Guardian Spirit who hovers above the city !

HARPALUS. Phosphoros ! . . . The last-born of the gods ! (*Dies.*)

(*The legionaries have made a movement to fall upon the confederates, but are prevented by the people, who rush to disarm and repulse them. The body of Harpalus is removed from the chair. Cleonice throws herself into the arms of Phosphoros, and they stand locked in a long embrace above the Praetorium . . . . From the left, behind the scene, a loud clash of cymbals is heard. The lovers stand motionless, lost in one another.*)

DAMIS (*rushing to the front of the scene*). Hear the voice of the cymbals ! The gates of the city are freed !

(*Trumpet call from the right.*)

ANDROCLES (*running forward*). Listen to the triumphant sound of the trumpet ! That is the Dionysian phalanx recapturing the Acropolis !

PHRYGIUS (*running forward*). Listen to its long-drawn echo ! To-morrow Dyrapolis will shake off the yoke of Rome and Byzantium. I, the King's son, affirm it !

PHOSPHOROS (*loosening himself from Cleonice's arms*). Be free once more, O my Dionysia ! Let the trumpet call of thy joy, the torch of thy hope leap from height to height, from city to city, through all Ionia, beyond Greece and Propontis, to announce to the whole world: 'The ancient fetters are broken; there is a god who reigns in the heart of

man : an immortal joy soars upward from the earth ! '

(*The people form a wide circle around the Agora. The three conspirators stand in the middle.*)

ALL. Glory to Cleonice ! Glory to Phosphoros, Archon of Dionysia !

PHOSPHOROS (*steps down from the Praetorium holding Cleonice by the hand*). O my brothers of the city of Dionysos, it is not I whom you must applaud ; it is the all-powerful love of this heroic maiden which has performed the miracle. Her bare arms have been stronger than the pikes of the legionaries. The flames from her eyes have carried further than the torches and tapers of your priests. Her heart of fire has been mightier than all the other hearts together of the unawakened city. It is she who has broken my bonds, drawn your swords from their sheaths and brought forth Victory from the soil of the city like a goddess armed with flashes of lightning. O Cleonice, I do not ask you if you love me . . . for since your arms have clasped me to deliver me, your love surges through my veins and your breath has become my voice ! Will you then be called my wife and share my destiny ?

CLEONICE. My hero, my husband, my dream and my god ! With you I will share all, life and death, heaven or hell, immortality or nothingness ! When you were not yet yourself, already you lived radiantly in my thoughts. Now that victory has crowned you, I live only in you !

(*They embrace and stand lost in mutual contemplation. The three Bacchantes have stepped down from the stairs of the temple of Dionysos, fascinated at sight of the lovers whom they contemplate with intense curiosity. Suddenly they halt.*)

AGLAE. Before their kisses, my goblet's power is gone.
(*She averts her eyes and bows her head.*)

CYTHERIS. And my flowers wither before their smiles.
(*She sinks down on the steps of the Temple.*)

MIMALONE. Before such love as this I fain must break my thyrsus.

(*She breaks her thyrsus in two and throws herself down on the stairs in a convulsion of despair.*)

ALCETAS (*his eyes bent on the couple*). What beauty is theirs ! I too am overcome.

LYCOPHRON. Tremble, tyrants of the Soul, and pay heed, immortal gods ! Behold all-powerful Love in the heart of man, and the heroic couple in the heart of the City !

SCENE V

THE SAME, *the* BISHOP.

THE BISHOP (*coming forth hastily from the basilica*). A new and terrible spectacle assails my eyes and ears. Phosphoros, you who have just killed your master and your judge ; Phosphoros, sower of revolt in the heart of youth, brazen seducer of a maiden consecrated to Christ, you have thrust this town into an abyss of calamities. You are acclaimed, you are hailed as Archon. But I whose pastoral staff dominates the city, I defy you to name the master through whom your devilish magic works. If you dare to name the source of your power, instantly he will lie shattered on the ground like a statue with feet of clay, and the wrath of heaven will consume you. Wherefore by the power conferred on me by Christ, I summon you to proclaim publicly the god

in whose name you are raising the city against its legitimate lords, Caesar and the Church. Speak ! or I shall curse you !

PHOSPHOROS. Bishop, you who call yourself Shepherd of the People and Instrument of God, I have no fear of your thunderbolts. If you know only how to curse, it is you who come from hell. This noble maiden has followed me freely. As for myself, I shall not shrink from naming my Guardian Spirit. Like your Christ, the Archangel whom I invoke comes down from heaven ; *He is the other Voice of the Almighty* ; and I am about to reveal Him before all. Listen, you my friends, brothers of Harmodius, all you children of struggle and sons of sorrow, of old my fellow-mourners in the silence of oppression, to-day my brothers in arms in the freedom of joy ; know that in you all dwells a spark of the hidden godhead—the fire stolen from heaven, an ember from the torch of the Angel who illuminates the world with kindled souls. It is this divine fire that I seek to rekindle in you, in spite of the axe of Caesar which intimidates the flesh, in spite of the crozier of the Church which intimidates the spirit. There was a time when the gods used to come down to men to instruct them. We see now the dawn of the age when emancipated mankind will ascend towards the gods. The Dionysian phalanx has recaptured the Acropolis ; people of Dionysos, go you and throw down the statue of Caesar ! In its stead, on the altar of the last-born of the gods, we will set up the torch-bearing Angel, the Guardian Spirit of the new city, Lucifer the Liberator !

THE PEOPLE (*streams out with cries of*) : Lucifer the Liberator !

THE BISHOP (*aside*). Unloose your inferno; I shall know how to hound it on against you! It is Cleonice who gives him strength; they must be parted at all costs.

(*He goes back hastily into the basilica.*)

(*From within the Temple of Dionysos are heard solemn strains of nuptial music, in which the flute is blended with the lyre, accompanied by the mysterious vibrations of cymbals. The High Priest appears under the portico, preceded by the maidens who have changed their mourning robes into festive garments. The Chorus Leader carries the Flammeum, a purple veil spangled with stars, while the second holds the bridal wreath; with these they attire Cleonice. The others carry torches. The maidens stand at the right, the Dionysian phalanx on the left so as to form a double line leading to the City Hall. It is twilight.*)

PHOSPHOROS (*turns round sharply and notices the torches being lighted in the courtyard of the Praetorium, to Cleonice*). What is happening? Where are we? Are you Cleonice? And am I Phosphoros? Are you the Virgin of the Desert, you who now appear before me under a veil of flame flecked with stars, and who mingle in your eyes, as in brimming cups, the ardour of the mistress with the pride of the wife? This nuptial palace . . . these torches which beckon to us . . . is it not a vision? . . . I tremble before the realization of the dream and dare not step into the Temple of our delight. . . .

CLEONICE (*radiant*). Wherefore, my noble hero, are you become so fearful? My Christ I have renounced for your sake. Can you divine the courage I needed? Henceforth you are my Messiah, and I tremble not before my bliss; I inhale it with all my senses. These torches are too pallid for

me, these perfumes too faint. The volcanic fire of my heart, repressed till now, rises to my temples and turns my blood into streams of lava. I am athirst to die in you !

PHOSPHOROS (*gazing at her rapturously*). How shall we ever expiate the immensity of such bliss ?

CLEONICE. Ah ! What matters that ? Is not this heavenly nuptial night worth eternity ? Heaven envies us, and the whole firmament flames upon our hearth. And then, you do not yet know Love. . . . What matter to him joy or sadness, triumph or defeat, glory or ignominy, provided he be Love ! He can brave everything if he remain equal to himself, and the soul that loves reigns as a sovereign over the world, even in the very bosom of grief. From the shining summit where we stand, lead me to the depths of the abyss, and you will see whether Cleonice is proud to suffer for you.

PHOSPHOROS. Come ! The universe is in your eyes !

(*They mount the steps of the City Hall, and turn round on reaching the door-way. With graceful gestures Phosphoros salutes the Dionysian phalanx, and Cleonice the bevy of maidens. At the same moment the three Bacchantes, transfigured, move forward to the foot of the steps.*)

AGLAE (*pouring a libation from her goblet*). To you divine Desire !

CYTHERIS (*strewing flowers from her basket*). To you, the flowers that never die !

MIMALONE (*raising two clusters of palm leaves in her hands*). To Love triumphant, palm leaves and wings !

(*Damis comes forward as leader of the Dionysian detachment to recite the first verse of the Nuptial Ode.*)

Hail to thee, Hail !
Ardent bride,
Thy day of days has come.
Under the lighted torch
We have awaited thee ;
Thy splendour has risen,
Thy hero has conquered.

ALL.

Evios ! Evios !
Hymen ! Hymen !

THE LEADER OF THE MAIDENS.

We have put on
The sword with the myrtle wreath
And the tyrant is no more.
With the myrtle wreath and the sword
We have fought and prevailed.
A new God shall be born,
A hero has come.

ALL.

Evios ! Evios !
Hymen ! Hymen !

(*While the married pair slowly move towards the back of the City Hall, the young men and the maidens cross their swords and torches, and alternately recite the epode.*)

DAMIS.

On this day let us wed
Our torches and our swords
Wreathed in myrtle.

THE LEADER OF THE MAIDENS.

Bear with you your fair dream
To dwell in your home.
A new God is rising
With Love triumphant !

ALL

Evios ! Evios !
Hymen ! Hymen !

ACT FOUR

PHOSPHOROS'S GARDEN AT DIONYSIA.

Clusters of spreading trees, and here and there columns surmounted by busts of sages and heroes. A distant view of the sea is framed by the statues of Castor and Pollux, on marble horses which rear towards the sky. To the left a little portico with Ionian columns. In a niche of the chapel stands a marble image of Lucifer taking flight, with one foot on the globe. Before the statue is the household altar, at the foot of which lies a trophy of weapons. Near by is a stone bench. To the right can be seen the perspective of the town dominated by the Acropolis.

SCENE I

CLEONICE, *before the altar, is fastening to it a garland of foliage and some wreaths of flowers. Phosphoros is seated on the stone bench. A guard is standing in front of him.*

PHOSPHOROS. Nothing from Damis ?

THE GUARD. No, master.

PHOSPHOROS. Nothing from Androcles and the army ?

THE GUARD. Nothing.

PHOSPHOROS. Nothing from Phrygius ?

THE GUARD. Nothing either.

PHOSPHOROS. Very well. If they come let them enter without delay.

(*Exit the guard.*)

CLEONICE. Why has my love ceased for three days to tell me his thoughts? Why is he mute as a shadow this morning before his Beloved?

PHOSPHOROS. There are days when a man needs to withdraw into the source of his being, so that he may listen to the voices of silence.

CLEONICE (*dropping her unfinished garland*). Silence before me? Is your conscience afraid of your soul? What is happening?

PHOSPHOROS. You know it all.

CLEONICE (*comes swiftly and sits on the bench. She takes Phosphoros's hands, then clasps his head between hers and looks deep into his eyes*). It is not true. What ails you? What is the veil over your eyes? What sadness behind? O Phosphoros, reply to the soul of your life! Within me I hear the eternal music of the love I have for you. The strings of it vibrate, now with tenderness now with rapture, the celestial harmony is ever there. I possess you by the right of this force which is without measure or limit. I have given everything—and I want everything!

PHOSPHOROS. O my living Muse, my beautiful desire, my dream incarnate, how can I resist you, dear diviner? Well then, yes, I am suffering. Until now I had the faith which moves mountains, I felt in myself the strength of Hercules to overturn them. I have braved the two supreme powers of this world: Caesar and the Church! . . . But the world marches behind them. Inevitable as Nemesis, the universe which I sought to raise in revolt is about to fall back upon me.

CLEONICE. Speak not so, my Phosphoros. The swift-footed Victories are goddesses. Be not ungrateful

towards the one who touched your forehead with her flashing white wing. Remember that day of all days. After your departure with our phalanx, I could no longer stay here. In spite of you I meant to join you in the supreme hour. When I reached the camp, your tent was empty ; the fight was beginning. Opposite me Caesar's army was sweeping over the plain ; the dull bronze of the undulating legions was streaked with the brilliant hues of the barbarian detachments. The hill on which I stood was gleaming with breastplates, helmets and swords ; it was the consecrated phalanx led by you, with Damis and Androcles on the wings. The neighbouring height bristled with a moving palisade ; it was Phrygius with the Gallic horsemen and the archers of Dyrapolis. The mountain and the valley were exchanging rallying-cries. The mountain shouted : ' Phrygius ! ' and the valley replied: ' Phosphoros ! ' Then, seizing a handful of javelins, you darted forward in the midst of your men, crying aloud : ' For Lucifer and the Free City ! ' My whole body seemed at once to burn and to shiver ; your guards held me back from following you, and for a whole day I watched our phalanx enveloped in the whirl of the battle, advancing, retreating, with shields in close array, now in squares, now in triangles, often broken asunder, but ever rebuilding from its shattered fragments the agile tortoise formation of its shields. And overhead the unmoving Fates slowly let fall from their impartial hands the white dice of life, the black dice of death. I thought I should swoon. At length the Roman line broke and the phalanx swept through to the cry of ' Lucifer and Dionysia ! '

PHOSPHOROS. And that evening, after our men had taken possession of the Roman camp, when I saw my Cleonice ride on to the battlefield like an Amazon with streaming locks—how I lifted her from her neighing charger, maddened by distance and the clamour of trumpets ! There was fire on your lips. . . . Then, ah then, I saw my Victory, I held her in my arms !

CLEONICE. You remember it. . . . Why then doubt it to-day ? Think of Damis when he came to you to plead for the liberty of a captive, as if for his own brother. The gracious youth was radiant as though he had become a young Apollo. Think of Androcles, stained with blood and dust, but bearing his trophy, composed and strong like Hercules. Think of Phrygius, proclaimed King by his people, offering you his hand with the pride of a Jupiter. Thanks to you, the first had won a soul, the second a trophy, the third a crown. They came to exhibit their conquests to their master. For it was you who had filled them with your breath, it was you who had exalted them to the level of their gods !

PHOSPHOROS. Yes, to create free men—that is my desire. On that day the city of my dream came to life.

CLEONICE. And why should it not live for ever ?

PHOSPHOROS. Because there are some heights which are reached only once and from which the limits of destiny can be viewed.

CLEONICE. Listen, my Fire and my Light, do you know what I felt on that evening of battle, when I slipped panting and exhausted, from my horse into your arms ? Apart we are powerless ; united we can do

anything. When we love each other it is a world which meets a world. Their impact has repercussions in the infinite. Each of the two seems about to perish in the tempest; but behold, from their embrace a new world is born.

PHOSPHOROS. It is true! The branches of the new city have blossomed.

CLEONICE. We are its living stem.

PHOSPHOROS. And the city will live as long as the sap flows from the stem to the branches.

CLEONICE. And as long as we two together shall be one body, one soul and one thought.

PHOSPHOROS. Thus we are invincible.

SCENE II

THE SAME, *then* LYCOPHRON, *who moves forward slowly, stops in front of the pair and gazes at them, leaning with two hands on his stick.*

CLEONICE. The seer!

PHOSPHOROS. Lycophron, the first time I saw you, you foretold victory to me and your prophecy has been fulfilled. Now misgivings seem to trickle from your weary eyelids. What do you bring us, old man ever bowed under the shadow of the future?

LYCOPHRON. Be on your guard, Phosphoros; do not rest on your laurels. The hour of trouble is approaching. Beware of the Bishop. . . . Beware of the Christians. Be vigilant over your city!

PHOSPHOROS. Let us leave the Bishop and his monks to their plots. Damis, Androcles and Phrygius are the living pillars of my city. They too are on the watch. As long as they stand, I shall fear nothing.

LYCOPHRON. Tremble for Damis; his tender and loyal heart has not your strength—the sapling may be broken by a storm. Check the boldness of Androcles! He is impulsive and rash; a lion may fall into the huntsman's net. Distrust the pride of Phrygius; he is ambitious. You have made him a king; his crown is a rival of your torch.

PHOSPHOROS. I, beware of Damis, Phrygius and Androcles? Why, I trust in their hearts more than in the ramparts of my forts. If that is so, then tell my soul to distrust my own body, my own arms and my own fiery heart.

LYCOPHRON. The body has often betrayed the soul.

PHOSPHOROS. Have you come to rob me of my courage?

LYCOPHRON. I am come to steel it against adversity!

PHOSPHOROS. Rash old man, it was you who sent me to the Temple of the Unknown God, where my Guardian Spirit flashed before my sight, it is you who have started me sword in hand on my headlong course. Why do you speak to me now of misfortune and death, when you have promised me Victory and Immortality?

LYCOPHRON. Victory is the flame which rises from the great funeral pyres. And immortality is the daughter of death. (*He takes some steps towards the back, turns round between the Dioscuri with upraised arms and disappears.*)

PHOSPHOROS. Whether these be an old man's fears or a seer's visions, what is the use of testing them? Let us assemble the phalanx. I feel the approach of the great battle between the world and me.

CLEONICE. I shall be in it, shall I not?

PHOSPHOROS. On that day then, Cleonice wishes to struggle at my side?

CLEONICE. Wish it? I demand it. To lose one's self in love till the world is forgotten is a human joy; but to fight and conquer together—that is a pleasure of the gods!

PHOSPHOROS. My Winged Victory you will ever be! (*He clasps her in his arms and goes out.*)

SCENE III

CLEONICE, *soon after the* MONK.

Cleonice, left alone, goes towards the household altar, takes a palm branch from it and goes to sit down on the marble seat. Soon she drops the branch and falls into reverie. The Monk emerges stealthily from a clump of trees and cautiously approaches Cleonice, looking around carefully. Having convinced himself that he is not observed, he assumes a grave attitude, puts his hands within his sleeves, posts himself at a distance and fixes his eyes on the wife of the Archon.

CLEONICE (*turning swiftly with a start*). A monk here? What do you want with me?

THE MONK (*stretching out his hands towards her*). Lost sheep of the Lord, may the Divine grace be upon you!

CLEONICE. How did you find your way into this garden?

THE MONK. God's messengers come by all roads.

CLEONICE. By what right are you addressing me? On behalf of whom?

THE MONK. Our most holy Bishop sends me to the wife of the Archon. He would speak with the soul of her who was once the Virgin of the Desert.

He knows that noble Cleonice is the daughter of pious Laodikos, he knows that, even if the claws of the Demon have taken hold of her, yet the secret grace of the Lord has never deserted her. . . . Yes, at the bottom of your heart you are still a Christian. . . . He knows that your soul is clouded by the growing dangers which threaten the city . . . and the Archon ! All this troubles him. . . . Come with me. . . . The sovereign power of him who held you at the font will absolve you, and his wise counsel will give you the strength to assure the triumph of God . . . while still remaining the wife of Phosphoros. (*He makes the sign of the cross.*)

CLEONICE. You have spied upon me to take me unawares. Because you have stolen like a thief into my sanctuary, you think you can creep as far as my heart? Insolent monk of the hypocritical band whose books distil the honey of Holy Writ while sowing hate in the hearts of the people, you have sworn to your Bishop, our enemy, to lead Cleonice as a penitent to his feet ! Go back and tell him who sent you that the Virgin of the Desert is now only the wife of Phosphoros. He is her king, her master and her god. If the Bishop will speak with me, let him come here. I shall not go to him.

THE MONK (*crosses himself again, then moves suddenly towards Cleonice and addresses her in a tune of insidious familiarity*). Unhappy woman ! That is not all ! There is also a question of an imperial secret . . . of a clandestine message from Caesar to our Holy Father the Bishop . . . the life of your husband is at stake !

CLEONICE (*rising in great agitation*). The life of Phosphoros ! (*recovering herself—aside*). But no ! That is only a trap. (*Aloud.*) Ah ! I understand you would like to communicate to Caesar the plans of the Archon. . . . Priests, keep your own secrets. Cleonice knows how to defend her husband's life . . . and has given proof of it !

THE MONK (*drawing back haughtily*). Demented woman ! Know then the whole truth. Dangers surround you and lurk for you at every step. The threat comes not only from Caesar and his allies, but from the people of Dionysia. There are muffled stirrings of revolt, insurrection is near. On all sides it is said that the sacrilege in the name of Lucifer will bring down all the scourges of God upon the city and that her last day draws near. Already you are called 'the Devil's couple'. At this moment the Christians are gathering in the crypt, and with loud cries are urging the Bishop to launch his anathema against you. But in his compassion he still pauses. . . . He seeks to save you, on condition that you come to justify yourself before him.

CLEONICE. I refuse. God alone is my judge.

THE MONK (*scornfully*). Very well, I will leave you. But bear in mind what the people of Dionysia will think. They have been told that the wife of Phosphoros possessed the courage of the Christian women martyrs. Now they will say: 'She is audacious enough when she passes in the street in her chariot under the protection of her guards or when she parades with the Archon before the phalanx. But when it is a question of confessing her faith, then she is afraid and flees like a

cowardly heathen. . . . And the slave of Phosphoros cowers behind her wretched idol ! '

CLEONICE. Afraid of your master ? Afraid of the people ? Afraid of you ? Well look here. (*She goes towards the household altar, takes from it a wreath of red lilies and puts it on her head, then she pulls a javelin from the trophy of weapons.*) With my head wreathed in flowers I will go to confess my love and my faith at the tribunal of your master, in the presence of all the Christians. If they ask me what Phosphoros has done for Dionysia, I will show them this Roman javelin, one of a thousand captured from the forest of iron of the legions ! And if they wish to stone me then, why, Lucifer will have a martyr ! (*Exit rapidly at the back.*)

THE MONK (*looking after her*). I have succeeded ! . . . It is by their pride that the children of the Devil can be caught. The Bishop said to me : 'The people love her ; she enhances the Archon's prestige. At all costs they must be parted before the mob surrounds their house ! ' Now it is done ! She is hastening to the crypt like a wild beast to the pit. Once she is inside, I bar the door with iron chains. Let her gnash her teeth in prison, the heretic ! And now to foment this insurrection, so that before nightfall I may see this devil's house go up in flames ! (*Exit running.*)

SCENE IV

PHOSPHOROS, *a* GUARD, *soon after* DAMIS.

PHOSPHOROS (*returning*). The city is desolate ; not a sign of Androcles ; Damis still absent. . . . Can

the seer have been right? What are the coming disasters heralded by such a silence? (*To the guard.*) Where is Cleonice?

THE GUARD. She has just gone out with a monk.

PHOSPHOROS. With a monk? And whither have they gone?

THE GUARD. To the basilica.

PHOSPHOROS. This is strange. (*Enter Damis.*) You Damis? At last.

DAMIS (*running forward*). Phosphoros, your life is in danger! The people are surrounding your house. I entreat you, have your doors guarded by your phalanx.

PHOSPHOROS. Oh, what matters my house! You come from the camp? What is Androcles doing?

DAMIS. Alas! The tidings I bring are so terrible that they turn my blood cold in my veins and benumb my tongue. I have ridden the whole night, carrying the dreadful news within my bosom. Now that I must bring it forth, my heart fails me. I shall die of it! (*He collapses on to the seat.*)

PHOSPHOROS. Speak, I am prepared for anything.

DAMIS. At three hours' march from the pass, at the other end of the mountain, a messenger came rushing towards me. The camp is destroyed. . . . Androcles, surprised by Caesar's vanguard, has died in the defence of his post. . . . The army is in flight!

PHOSPHOROS. How did Androcles let himself be surprised?

DAMIS. How? That is the worst of all. Phrygius has betrayed us.

PHOSPHOROS. Phrygius?

DAMIS. The coward always envied you. Ever since

Caesar's victory over the Parthians, Phrygius has been plotting his treason by stealth. It was he who informed Constantine of Androcles's movements. In return Caesar has guaranteed to him his title as King of Dyrapolis. Following his lead, the whole of Ionia is deserting us. Ephesus, Susa, Halicarnasses, Laodicea—all acclaim Phrygius—who is treating with Caesar.

PHOSPHOROS. Phrygius—whom I treated as my brother in arms ! I made him King of Dyrapolis, and he prefers to wear an iron collar under Caesar's rod rather than to live and die a free man ! The villain ! But all is not over. My phalanx will not betray me. I am still Archon of Dionysia and Lucifer watches over me.

DAMIS (*rising with deep concern*). Phosphoros, I fear for you. . . . Caesar is drawing near. His spies are fomenting sedition in the town, and the angry people led by their Bishop are turning against you.

PHOSPHOROS. The Angel struck down by the thunderbolt is also the Angel who reascends. We are his sons, immortal like himself.

DAMIS. And yet . . . if he were to be vanquished by that other Son of God, by the pale Christ with His halo, come down from his heaven to die and rise again in the blood-stained darkness of the earth. Phosphoros ! Phosphoros ! If your Guardian Spirit should have deceived you !

PHOSPHOROS. Damis, you have doubted me ! Now I am alone. (*He drops on to the seat.*)

DAMIS (*alarmed*). You are suffering, friend. I cannot bear to see you thus. Speak to me, I entreat you. . . . Reply to your brother !

PHOSPHOROS (*still seated*). No, you are no longer my brother. We had a common faith, luminous as the torch which of old the runners of Athens used to hand on to each other at the festival of Prometheus. It was on you that I relied to hand it on to the world ; but you have let the brand fall ! (*He stands up.*) Oh, to possess a single friend who believes in you is to possess the earth ; for one soul is worth more than all wealth. But to see your faith die out in the heart of your best friend—there is the supreme sorrow ! I know that the spirit who appeared to me at the temple of the Unknown God did not lie. If your faith is deserting you, leave me and go to join Phrygius. I shall remain alone to await the people, the Bishop and Caesar.

DAMIS. O my friend ! Forgive me if I have wavered out of tenderness for you. The heart of Damis knows all he owes to Phosphoros. At the age when the soul expands leaf by leaf, like a white lotus on the turbid waters of life, you brought mine to blossom with your words of fire. At the age when one must fight in the cause of truth, you marched before me and I followed you. No, they did not lie, those paths of my adolescence, scented by the steps of divine Beauty when I first met you. You have been my friend, my brother, my master. You showed me the immortal pattern towards which I aspire. I owe you a new soul—and for that I believe in you ! I am ready now to fight again for the dreams of our youth. Answer, Phosphoros, have I lost my faith ?

PHOSPHOROS (*clasping him in his arms*). Pardon, brother, it was I who wavered. I had doubted you ! And

now if you will strive again for Phosphoros, go and find Cleonice at the basilica. I fear some snare of the Bishop. . . . At this moment, I feel it, a mortal danger is threatening us. At all costs bring her back here !

DAMIS. Be easy. I will hasten there. (*Exit.*)

(*Twilight—a murmur of voices from behind.*)

A GUARD. My lord, the people are thronging at the garden gate and with fierce cries demanding entrance. Shall we drive them back with pikes and stones ?

PHOSPHOROS. Open the gates wide ! On a day of disaster I will meet my people face to face. He who governs the city of Dionysos must know how to deal with the miscreants in his own ranks. Open the gates !

THE GUARD (*aside*). The Archon is going mad ! (*Exit with an angry gesture.*)

SCENE V

PHOSPHOROS, *the* MONK, *a band of the* PEOPLE, *later* CLEONICE.

Enter the Monk, followed by a mob armed with pikes, stakes and cudgels, with a ferocious clamour, 'Where is he ?' At the sight of the Archon, standing alone and composed before his household altar, the People, awestruck, form into a semi-circle to the right.

THE MONK (*to the People*). You see him ! There is the man who has ruined you. Caesar in his wrath has said that he will reduce to ashes the rebellious city, burn the citizens alive in their dwellings, and pass the ploughshare through the soil that was once

Dionysia—unless Phosphoros be delivered to him dead or alive. And he, does he look even conscious of it? There he stands before the idol of his god whom he calls Lucifer. But I, I tell you that it is Satan! (*Signs of alarm among the People.*) And then notice that all his friends have left him. Even his wife Cleonice is no longer by him!

VOICES FROM THE PEOPLE. Where is she?

THE MONK. In the basilica, at the feet of the Bishop, confessing her sins and praying for pardon. (*Murmur of astonishment in the crowd.*)

THE OLD MAN. If Cleonice deserts him, the Archon is lost. (*He comes forward towards Phosphoros.*) Caesar is marching upon us and threatening to destroy the city! Restore peace to us and save our lives!

THE YOUNG MAN. Give us back our pleasures!

THE WOMAN. Give us back the sacraments which redeem!

THE OLD MAN. What good is your god to us, if the city is about to perish?

PHOSPHOROS. What good is the latest-born of the gods to you? To be free men; to cringe neither before Caesar nor the Cross; to know that Beauty, Truth and Justice are within you, and to conclude with them a pact which shall make you masters of yourselves and others. Unless each of you feel himself a Lucifer to defy Caesar and the Church, you are unworthy to die with me for Dionysia, the Mother of Heroes and the City of Free Spirits!

THE MONK. You see, he seeks to sacrifice you to his arrogance; he wants to draw you down with him

into the pit of Satan. And you will let him? Come, come, slay this son of the devil, strike down his altar! You will save your lives and the Church will take you back to her bosom!

THE PEOPLE (*moving against Phosphoros, who has remained motionless*). Death! Death!

CLEONICE (*hastens in from behind and interposes between Phosphoros and the People*). Strike me first! (*She stands in front of him with extended arms. The People draw back.*)

THE MONK (*dumbfounded—aside*). But I had imprisoned her.

THE OLD MAN. Cleonice!

THE WOMAN. The Christian woman!

THE PEOPLE. The Virgin of the Desert!

CLEONICE. Learn the truth then! This infamous monk entrapped me. On pretence of leading me to the Bishop and to the assembly of Christians to justify my husband, he locked me treacherously into the crypt as into a prison cell!

VOICES FROM THE PEOPLE. Is this true? Is this true?

THE MONK. She is lying!

(*Enter Damis with pieces of a chain in each hand.*)

CLEONICE. There is my witness!

DAMIS. This chain fastened the door of the crypt in which this monk had shut up the Archon's wife. But I broke it! Here are the pieces! (*He flings them at the Monk's feet.*)

PHOSPHOROS (*taking the hands of his wife and of Damis and coming forward to the People*). And thus we shall break all the chains you have riveted upon men's souls!

(*At the Archon's words, a group of armed young men of the phalanx and a group of maidens run forward with a*

sudden movement from both sides of the chapel, before which stand the statue of Lucifer and the household altar. The young men draw swords to defend him, and the maidens hold out palm branches to protect him. At the head of the two groups, a youth and a maiden raise on high bright torches. The people draw back in amazement.)

SCENE VI

THE SAME ; *the* BISHOP *appears between the* DIOSCURI *with two deacons bearing pitch brands with red smoky flames.*

THE BISHOP. Cleonice, rebellious woman, you who were once the pure Virgin of the Desert, hear me. I am about to pronounce the anathema of the Church upon this man accursed who has ruined this city and set up the cult of the Angel of Darkness. But I will try to save you still. Abandon the outcast, if you will not receive the anathema with him.

CLEONICE. Do not hope to win me back ! Did not a bold messenger from my noble hero come just now to break the bars of your church in which you sought to lock me in among the bones of the dead, so as to stifle my love under your crozier ? My church is as wide as the earth, as high as heaven where shines the star of Lucifer. (*She throws her arm round the shoulders of Phosphoros.*) Yes, I love the Angel of Light and his Hero. The more you curse him the more I shall love him. For I love him with that love which preceded the birth of the world and will outlast it, that love whence divine souls flowed and which springs from the heart of God. This love dreads nothing, knowing itself

immortal. It laughs at your threats, your bonds and your torches.

THE BISHOP. Threefold disaster upon you ! Have you thought that, accursed upon earth, you forfeit heaven too ?

CLEONICE (*ironically*). And if I parted from him, if I cringed at your feet, would he enter Heaven with me ?

THE BISHOP. Never ! What comes from God returns to God ; but what comes from the devil returns to the devil. He is damned to all eternity.

CLEONICE. Then keep your Heaven ! I choose Hell with my Beloved !

THE BISHOP. Be ye then both accursed. In the Name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, I excommunicate you and deliver you into the hands of Satan ! Children of the Evil One, be abhorred of all men and all spirits, a thing loathed by day and at the mercy of the night. Be it forbidden to all Christians to greet you, to pray, work or eat with you. Let no priest sustain you in the hour of death. May your bed be fruitless, your hearth ill-omened. Let those who shall give you bread, water or fire be accursed with you. Let there be solitude wheresoever you shall set your foot. Let terror march before your eyes and death at your heels. Let all nations drive you out, mountains fall upon you, rivers engulf you, heaven and earth cry out on you : 'Anathema upon the accursed pair ! ' (*To the deacons.*) Throw down the brands. (*The deacons fling the brands to the ground and quench them with their feet.*) May your lives be trampled under foot like these brands, may your souls be quenched like these flames !

THE MONK (*to the People, pointing at the pair*). Behold Anti-Christ and his concubine !

THE YOUNG MEN *of the phalanx* (*guarding the household altar, move with drawn swords towards the Monk, crying*). Coward !

PHOSPHOROS (*checking them with a gesture*). Let us endure with unmoved souls the excommunication of the oppressors of the soul and the hatred of their slaves.

(*Exit the Bishop with the deacons. The People have drawn back, horrorstruck, but remain as though fascinated by the luminous couple, who stand in solemn posture before the altar between the ranks of the phalanx and the maidens, amid a forest of swords, torches and palm boughs.*)

THE MONK (*aside*). I believe that notwithstanding the curse he will seduce them again. (*Aloud—to the People.*) Begone, heathens !

SCENE VII

PHOSPHOROS *and* CLEONICE, *alone.*

PHOSPHOROS. What a mournful silence has fallen all at once ! Night is coming on, and solitude extending around us like an immense circle. Look at those quenched brands still smouldering on the ground. Are those truly our souls ? Is it all over ?

CLEONICE (*looks at the brands and shivers, then clasps the hand of Phosphoros with sudden resolution*). No ! All begins afresh. The world may be born again from one love, provided it be the highest.

PHOSPHOROS (*clasping her in his arms*). Let us prove then

to the world that a man and a woman who love each other in the radiance of an immortal idea can brave the whole universe !

CLEONICE. Let us be the temple of the living city !

ACT FIVE

THE TEMPLE OF THE UNKNOWN GOD

The same setting as at the opening of Act Two. Stormy night. A gale moans round the columns of the portico. Thunder peals as if it would shake the foundations of the mountain. The black sphinx and the white sphinx, crouching over the abyss at the entry of the inaccessible sanctuary, with their wings outspread, appear and disappear through the darkness by the glare of the lightning flashes, which recur at frequent intervals.

SCENE I

HERAKLIDOS (*striding out of his shelter and stooping to the right towards the valley*). Still no one! . . . Yet I am sure that he must come on this wild night by the obscure ravine which leads to the steep mountain-top. But in this black and hissing whirlpool I can detect no human voice, no sign of a torch. The thunderbolts fall, the furious winds assail the mountain on every side; the raging elements shriek in their eddying whirl as if they were the masters of the earth and as if the everlasting Law had no control over them. Even so in the populous cities, crowned by a white acropolis, do human passions rage, when no sage or hero is there to guide

them and when the sun of truth fails to pierce their cloud masses with its shining beams. (*The storm seems to recede, the lightning continues.*) Phosphoros ! Phosphoros ! Your city is about to crumble. But you, her last hero, herald of a new world, you must proclaim your faith to the end, without walls or comrades to protect you. If now the world were to see you waver, mankind's Hope would sink with its courage to dare. From your example must shine forth a gleam bright enough to illumine the future. Will you have the strength to persevere in the supreme ordeal of seeing your work apparently perish and yet holding fast to your belief, O you, the liberating Hero, O you whom my meditations have cherished like a mother and whom my thoughts have preceded like eagles ! To what purpose shall I have known the inmost secrets of divine knowledge, faithfully transmitted from age to age ? To what purpose my power of contemplating the Archetypes and of calling forth guardian spirits, unless a Hero by his life and death incarnates their power in the sight of men ? Yes, if I have dwelt in this solitary temple to the extremity of age, like a snow-clad cedar on the summit of Lebanon, it was to see one day a Hero take in his hand the torch of Lucifer ! But what will your final destiny be, O Phosphoros ? Strange to say, the heavenly voice commanded me last night to set 'two chalices on the altar for the communion of supreme love' ! . . . Who will fill these chalices ? Who will drink from them ? I know not ; I obey the Spirit which speaks to me. (*He goes with the two golden chalices in his hand to put them on the altar at the back between the two sphinxes.*)

The Voice said to me further: 'The oppressors of the Soul are threatening the Temple of Truth; but the children of Lucifer will save it by a burnt offering. From the sacrifice will issue the sign of fulfilment.' What is this sacrifice? Mystery. Something great and formidable is in preparation. As for me, I watch and wait. (*Further peals of thunder.*) But the storm is returning. Will the fury of the elements engulf my heroic seed like a wisp of straw? Demons of the air, watch over the son of the Temple; respect him, heavenly thunderbolt; for he also is a spark of the Almighty! (*He stoops to look into the valley.*) A torch! . . . a torch in the ravine! This way, Phosphoros . . . this way!

SCENE II

PHOSPHOROS, HERAKLIDOS.

Enter Phosphoros with a lighted torch. Heraklidos clasps him in his arms and leads him to the middle of the porch.

HERAKLIDOS. My son, my hero, welcome to my sanctuary. As you see, the Temple of Truth does not tremble amid the tempests.

PHOSPHOROS (*drops his torch and sits down exhausted at the foot of the column*). You alone can still save me.

(*The storm abates.*)

HERAKLIDOS. It was to save you that I sent for you. It is here that imperishable shields are forged against the Fates.

PHOSPHOROS. The omens are sinister. Everyone is deserting me, both Ionia and my city. Androcles is dead, Phrygius has betrayed me. Now at the moment of the supreme struggle, the whole city,

raised against me by the Bishop, threatens me with banishment... to be banished by Dionysia to which I had restored a soul.... Can you conceive that, Heraklidos?

HERAKLIDOS. They wish to live for themselves, and you to fight for the latest-born of the gods. How could you agree?

PHOSPHOROS. What will become of this god without the city which serves him as a temple and a pedestal? The rigour of destiny, like human effort, must have its bounds. At your call, I have left Cleonice in the hands of Damis and I have come. Restore to me now my city which is deserting me, or else your magic art is nothing but trickery and your god has lied about it!

HERAKLIDOS. Unless you have acted from the innermost prompting of your desire and unless you find your supreme joy in this thought, you are no Hero. As for me, I bear witness in the name of the living God, if I have not shown to you the true Guardian Spirit of your soul, I am nothing but an impostor.

PHOSPHOROS. But defeat?

HERAKLIDOS. There is only one defeat, to doubt oneself.

PHOSPHOROS. But my work?

HERAKLIDOS. The work for which one dies revives mysteriously by a heavenly magic. That is how the Eternal proves its worth over the Ephemeral. Did I promise you that you would die full of years and riches, and a king? Are you not beloved by a divine woman? Have you not reawakened the soul of Dionysia and brought forth a new god from the soil of your native land? Would you have done this miracle and tasted for a day the joy of the

Immortals, had I not given to you the baptism of fire by invoking your Guardian Spirit and your Star ?

PHOSPHOROS. My Guardian Spirit and my Star ? . . . Where are they ? Ah ! Could I but see them again !

HERAKLIDOS. You can. But consider : heaven, like earth, has its indefeasible laws. The Spirit which guides the life of heroes appears to them thrice only : on the eve of initiation, on the eve of victory and on the eve of death. You have seen yours twice already. Will you now invoke him for the third—and the last time ?

PHOSPHOROS. Yes, I will do so, happen what may ! Better to die seeing Him than to live doubting Him. Let me know from Him the last word of my destiny.

HERAKLIDOS (*scattering incense on the altar flame*). Angel of the Empyrean who dwellest in the abyss ; Prince of the Souls who strive against the Almighty in the name of the Eternal Himself, I invoke Thee ! Come at the call of a Hero who summons Thee. Lucifer ! Lucifer ! Come forth ! Come forth !

(*Lucifer appears above the chasm between the two sphinxes, seated on a globe as in Act Two. His arrival is announced by the same imperious strains of brass, but they are now hushed and as it were veiled by a tone of mourning. A red light moves in front of him, but no underground thunder accompanies him. Instead of holding his torch upraised to heaven, he holds it downward with his arm hanging beside him. His pensive countenance is bowed over his bosom.*)

LUCIFER. Thou hast called me before the appointed hour and against my will. What dost thou want of me, Phosphoros ?

PHOSPHOROS. Mighty Spirit, the first flash of thy glory aroused my naked soul and made my will master of the darkness of instinct. I have fought under thy sign, I have held aloft thy torch in my city. Like thee who kneadest warriors out of earthly clay, I have awakened souls, I have refashioned men's hearts, I have brought forth free men. But now the world which I have braved is falling back upon me like an ocean in overflow. My mother city, which has become my daughter city, seeks to banish me. I appeal to thee, my Archetype, my Archangel, give me back my weapons to fight, give me back my strength and my people !

LUCIFER. I have done for thee all that I could. Thou hast fought thy fight, and had thy victory. Great intentions must be expiated ; heroes have their Nemesis.

PHOSPHOROS. Thou wilt abandon me then ?

LUCIFER. No ; unless thou wilt abandon thyself.

PHOSPHOROS. But the work ? Thine and mine ? What will become of it ?

LUCIFER. The times of trial have come. My followers will be trampled down. The world is prostrate in submission, in prayer and in awe of the Eternal. Strength resides in those who deny themselves. The mastery of the earth belongs now to the other Word of God, to Christ. But I shall rise again out of my darkness, I shall break my chains asunder, I shall lift on high my torch. A day will come when we shall reign together upon earth, He the Messiah, come down from Heaven, and I the Archangel, risen again from the Abyss.

PHOSPHOROS. Hast thou no other promise ? What will become of me ?

LUCIFER. Thou art but one of the myriads of sparks from my torch. But thou mayst choose whether to annihilate thyself or live by thine own will.

PHOSPHOROS. What must I do to live ?

LUCIFER. Look at me, the Spirit cast out by thunderbolt, whom nothing crushes nor quells, neither scourges, nor tortures, nor the ruins of ages, neither the fear of Hell nor that of Eternity. And now the abyss draws me back, the night enfolds me anew. And yet I know . . . it belongs to me . . . The Empyrean . . . the Empyrean. . . .

(*Lucifer has raised his torch and slowly plunges into the chasm.*)

PHOSPHOROS. Do not go away ! . . . Stop ! A word . . . but one word more !

LUCIFER (*from the depth of the abyss*). Per . . . severe !

PHOSPHOROS. He has gone . . . without a word of hope.

HERAKLIDOS. The Star also will speak with you. . . . Hear it !

(*The glowing Star draws near, as in Act Two, along the gallery and remains poised over the chasm, to the sound of sweet music.*)

PHOSPHOROS. A heavenly serenity radiates from its golden core, and the glory of its beams sets men's souls at rest.

VOICE OF THE STAR. Phosphoros ! Phosphoros ! Believe in Love ! If thy chosen Soul still love thee when all else deserts, then the immensity of thy hopes will still shine on the horizon.

PHOSPHOROS. Will she be faithful to the end ?

THE VOICE. Thy faith is the measure of her love.

PHOSPHOROS. Shall I see her again in this world ?

THE VOICE. Hope !

PHOSPHOROS. And in the other ?

THE VOICE. Believe !

PHOSPHOROS. But where shall I find supreme Truth ?

THE VOICE. Where the Star of Lucifer shines through the Cross of Christ.

(*The Star fades.*)

PHOSPHOROS. It fades and goes out . . . and without a word of certainty for my thirsting heart ! Heraklidos ! Can you bring it back !

HERAKLIDOS. No power can rekindle that light or renew the vibration of that sublime voice. You will hear it no more in this world. But I hear other voices.

(*He moves towards the left end of the portico.*)

HERAKLIDOS. A torch in the ravine ! A Messenger !

SCENE III

THE SAME, *a* SERVANT *of Phosphoros.*

THE SERVANT (*out of breath*). I have followed you, my lord, through the darkness and the storm, under the guidance of the highland folk who are friends of Heraklidos and guard the Temple. Do not return to Dionysia ; never return there, your life depends on it.

PHOSPHOROS. Why, what has happened ?

THE SERVANT. Scarcely had you left when the assembly of the people condemned you to death. Then they pulled down the statue of Lucifer on the Acropolis and raided your house. Damis defended it with the phalanx, but he fell stricken with many blows at the foot of the household altar.

PHOSPHOROS. O Damis, flower of my youth, my living hope, the tenderest shoot on the tree of my life ! You too gone ! What a vengeance you

have taken for my doubts of you ! You have forestalled me in the palm of martyrdom !—And Cleonice ? You have nothing to tell me of Cleonice ?

THE SERVANT. The sentence of banishment did not include her, but she has disappeared.

(*From now on the storm is renewed with increasing force.*)

PHOSPHOROS. What do you say, wretched man ?

THE SERVANT. Yes, she has disappeared without leaving a trace. Some say she is in hiding in the refuge of the basilica, others say with her sister Cadmea. Others again believe her dead !

PHOSPHOROS (*seizing him by the throat*). Liar !

THE SERVANT. Master, have pity on me. I have been able but to note the rumours that are circulating. I have come to save your life at the peril of my own. Do not blame me for what is not my fault.

PHOSPHOROS. Of what use is your accursed news to me ? You should not have come without Cleonice! (*The servant goes away.*) Let the Fates deprive me of my earthly conquests : my city, my phalanx, my brothers in arms and my last refuge ; let them hew off my branches, slay me, and leave me naked on the ground like a stripped tree. . . . They have the right to do all this ; but they have no right to rob me of my divine conquest . . . the soul and the body of Cleonice !

HERAKLIDOS. But who says they have taken her from you ?

PHOSPHOROS. Then why is she not here ? Disappeared ! Dead ! Violated perhaps ! and unburied ! . . . Hear how this wind hisses and how this thunder roars ! God, mankind and nature are in league against the children of Lucifer. The

very elements have made a pact with Caesar and the Church, and the tempest at their bidding has borne the soul of Cleonice far from Phosphoros !

HERAKLIDOS. Let the tempest rage ; it is not everlasting. It is the will of God and the purpose of the unknown sages who watch over the earth—that no power in the world shall be able to part the daughter of Christ from the son of Lucifer !

PHOSPHOROS. Show her to me then ! Can the hurricane restore to me her voice or the boundless sea her face ? Cleonice gone without a trace ? Nought is left to me but the abyss which swallowed up my Guardian Spirit, and I go to join him !
(*He walks, as if dazed, towards the chasm.*)

HERAKLIDOS (*barring the way with his sceptre*). As long as I wear my tiara as a Hierophant and bear my sovereign sceptre, you shall not pass. (*He catches him by the arm and shakes him.*) Come to your senses, madman ! Do you not feel coming towards you a great soul who is seeking you through all the chaos of the elements ? Listen. . . . Listen to that human voice that sounds through the turmoil. . . .

VOICE BEHIND THE SCENE. Phosphoros ! Phosphoros !

PHOSPHOROS. Light ! I hear my living Star !

THE SERVANT (*leaning forward from the ledge of the Temple*). Torches ! torches ! They are coming up, they are coming up !

SCENE IV

THE SAME, CLEONICE, *followed by two mountain men carrying torches. She rushes forward under the porch, breathless and dishevelled.*

CLEONICE. Where are you ? Where are you ?

(*In the centre of the scene she comes upon Phosphoros. They stand facing each other for a few seconds.*)

PHOSPHOROS. Is it you, Cleonice, my Star human and divine ? My city, my earth and my heaven, my hell and my paradise !

(*Cleonice throws herself with a cry into his arms. At the same moment a thunderbolt strikes the top of the Temple with a sharp impact.*)

CLEONICE. Thunder as thou wilt, Jehovah. . . . Paradise is regained !

(*The thunder peals and is re-echoed far off.*)

PHOSPHOROS. Soul of my being ! It is wonderful to embrace beneath the fire of heaven. I had thought you dead ! False doubts of Love and you !

(*From now on the storm ceases completely. Dawn begins to break with a wan light.*)

CLEONICE. I came nigh to perishing in the raging city, beneath the wreck of our house, by the side of noble Damis and the few last faithful ones. Tears, pity, horror, despair all urged me to die . . . but you were far away. Through all the fury of the storm I have succeeded in joining you. Now God himself will no longer be able to part us.

PHOSPHOROS. Do you not shudder before your tragic destiny ?

CLEONICE. I have chosen it, my Phosphoros, and I love it above all others. Under the maledictions of the whole world, you shall learn the greatness of my love. It is now that the consecrated Virgin of the Desert will kindle the brands as your Beloved and the torches as your Wife. Yes, I swear it before the great Initiate, before the wise Hierophant in the Temple of the Unknown God, face to face

with the Sphinxes of the Eternal Mystery . . . whose veils are beginning to part.

PHOSPHOROS. O Cleonice, in this awful and hallowed spot, your stature seems to grow. Here, between the torches and the lightning, you come before me like a new bride ready for a new marriage.

CLEONICE. Yes, a new marriage in the extremity of sorrow, deeper than that in the extremity of joy.

PHOSPHOROS. But where shall we live? Without a native country? Without hearth and home? Caesar's sceptre extends from the Pillars of Hercules to the Indian Ocean, from the snows of the Sarmatian Mountains to the sands of Ethiopia.

CLEONICE. We shall carry within our hearts an everlasting home.

PHOSPHOROS. From city to city we shall have to drag our martyrdom.

CLEONICE. From your Promethean cries an avenger will be born.

PHOSPHOROS. The Virgins will weep on hearing your sea-nymph's music.

(*They take each other's hands and turn towards the Hierophant.*)

PHOSPHOROS AND CLEONICE (*with one voice*). The outcast pair salute thee, Heraklidos!

(*They kneel.*)

HERAKLIDOS. Though the whole world curse you, Heraklidos blesses you in his Temple! Preserve your faith intact in the riot of hostile towns, in the silence of torrid deserts. Hope on against every fear, believe still against every disaster, love on with a love stronger than death. The world whose hatred stifles you to-day will acclaim you one day as liberators, and from the bosom of the seas the city

of the future smiles to you like a shining island. (*He kisses them on the forehead and raises them.*) Betrothed of Exile, rise now as Spouses of Eternity. But before departing hear what the voice from above has said to me : ' If you wish the seed of your life to yield a human harvest, if you wish the city of your dreams to come forth from your example, you must light a holocaust ' . . . Thus the voice spoke to me.

PHOSPHOROS. What holocaust ?

HERAKLIDOS. I know not. It is for you to find the altar, the fire and the offering. By burning it you will rescue this threatened Temple, and from the sacrifice will come forth *the sign of fulfilment*. . . .

PHOSPHOROS AND CLEONICE (*with one voice*). *The sign of fulfilment !*

PHOSPHOROS. We will seek. . . .

CLEONICE. We will find. . . .

(*They extend their hands towards Heraklidos in a gesture of farewell.*)

PHOSPHOROS (*putting his arm round Cleonice's shoulders and wrapping her in his cloak*). Come beneath the cloak of exile !

CLEONICE. Let us start !

PHOSPHOROS. Whither shall we go ?

CLEONICE. To Egypt ?

PHOSPHOROS. To the cradle of our love ?

CLEONICE. To the holocaust !

(*Just as they are about to go out they are stopped by two mountain men bearing torches. Day is breaking.*)

FIRST HIGHLAND MAN. Do not descend the mountain. It is encircled by a legion !

SECOND HIGHLAND MAN. A band of soldiers is on the way up towards this Temple. With them is the

Bishop of Dionysia, and they are advancing with cries of 'Death to the children of Lucifer!'

HERAKLIDOS. The overbold priest! He dares to track you even into my very sanctuary! It is the first time that any priest has violated my solitude and defied me on my own mountain. They mean to catch the eagle with his eaglets, to throw the eyrie into the abyss. But the father will stand by his children and God will protect His Temple. Stay here; I will stop them.... Rather than let a hair of your head be harmed, I will bring forth flames from the ground and send boulders to hurtle down from the mountain top!

(*Exit.*)

SCENE V

PHOSPHOROS, CLEONICE.

PHOSPHOROS (*aside*). The legions led on by the Bishop ... the mountain encircled....

CLEONICE (*aside*). No way of escape ... no refuge ... we are lost....

(*They look questioningly at one another as if to read their thoughts in one another's eyes. Phosphoros draws his sword to show that he means to defend her; Cleonice bows her head, chilled with horror.*)

PHOSPHOROS (*aside*). Thus the inexorable Fates have cast their net and are about to envelop us in its meshes. Caesar and the Church are coming to grasp their prey in the Temple of Truth. Son of Lucifer, this is thy last fight! My Guardian Spirit has sunk; the Star is quenched.... How shall I defend myself? (*He walks over to the black sphinx.*)

Answer, thou my last witness, black Sphinx with wings of darkness, give me the ultimate counsels of despair !

CLEONICE (*aside*). So, then, even exile, even the desert is closed against us ! I shall see no more my serene Thebaid where Christ would appear to me. Is there then no refuge left for the children of Lucifer ? Now they are trapped between the jaws of the abyss and the approach of their mortal enemies. Oh ! those prophetic voices ! What did they forecast ? What did they want of us ? What is this holocaust ? (*She turns towards the white sphinx.*) Answer, O luminous Sphinx, thou whose wings are gleams of white, now is the hour of the supreme revelation ! Show us the right path. . . . (*The Roman trumpet call is heard very far off.*)

PHOSPHOROS. Do you hear the trumpets of our enemies ? I cannot stay here. My sword grows impatient. Before I die I will make a hecatomb of these cowards !

CLEONICE. Stay ! What could you do against so many assailants ? And what would become of me after your death ? Dragged as a captive to Dionysia, insulted by the mob, imprisoned by the Bishop or handed over to Caesar ? No, Phosphoros, the time of human hecatombs has gone by for us. (*Prompted by a sudden inspiration.*) By the blood of Christ, I understand now ! I know, I see, I feel the truth ! The path of light gleams before me ! Phosphoros ! Phosphoros ! Listen to me. That voice that spoke to the Hierophant, did it not say : ' The children of Lucifer shall save the Temple by kindling a holocaust ? '

PHOSPHOROS. Well ?

CLEONICE. Well, I tell you, I your prophetess, that this sacrifice is ourselves !

PHOSPHOROS. Ourselves !

CLEONICE. The voice of the highest Love is the voice of God, the cry of the Soul towards the Infinite, and the reply of the Infinite within the Soul. Just now I called upon God, He has answered me with the ultimate certainty. He said to me : ' There is no truth but in love and in death ! '

PHOSPHOROS. To die ? When the blood of youth is still throbbing in our veins ? Without having drunk the cup of life to the full ?

CLEONICE. Like the fumes of the sacrifice, our resurgent souls will ascend to heaven on the flames of the holocaust.

PHOSPHOROS. To die when my sword still quivers unappeased at my side ? When the task to which we have set our hands is in ruins?

CLEONICE. We shall vibrate through infinite space, and by the sacrifice our task will be fulfilled on earth.

PHOSPHOROS. To die when the wonders of Love are widening your eyes like deeper skies on unknown seas ?

CLEONICE. There are mightier wonders still in store for us. Do you not feel that death can only unite us more ardently ?

PHOSPHOROS. Whither will you lead me, terrible prophetess, my bride in marriage and in death ?

CLEONICE. Into my own kingdom . . . where there is neither obstacle nor barrier nor bounds . . . where free at last we shall mingle our souls like two meteors in a starry sky ! . . .

(*They clasp each other again and exchange a long look. Their lips seek and touch each other.*)

PHOSPHOROS. What bitterness and what sweetness on your lips? What a strange dawn in the darkness of your eyes! Your kiss of ice and fire has hallowed me for your mysterious kingdom . . . the air becomes rarer about me . . . the fetters of earth slip from me. (*The trumpet call is heard near by. Phosphoros tears himself from Cleonice's arms and waves his sword.*) Yes, then, let us die together, but let us die gladly, like true children of Lucifer! The world means to crush us? Let us liberate ourselves. It means to part us? Let us unite for ever. Death is pursuing us. Let us go to meet him. God demands a holocaust? Let us offer to him proudly, like a festival, the flower of our two lives and the heroic dream of our souls! Let us pass through the Night of Death towards a nobler day!

CLEONICE. Are you ready?

PHOSPHOROS. I am. Lead me.

CLEONICE (*drawing from her bosom a golden phial*). Look at this phial. It contains the supreme remedy. It came to me from a Phrygian woman whom long ago I freed from slavery. Its essence is a powerful narcotic. It leads into my kingdom through the limbo of everlasting sleep. . . . Do you understand? Such is the will of the Almighty. . . . See how the cups of liberation flash on the altar!

PHOSPHOROS. Let us drink then unflinching the cup of deliverance!

(*Cleonice pours the essence into the cups, gives one to Phosphoros, and takes the other.*)

CLEONICE. I drink to Phosphoros the Light-bearer!

PHOSPHOROS. I drink to Cleonice, my Winged Victory!

CLEONICE. To the divine Dream of our life!

PHOSPHOROS. To Love triumphant!

CLEONICE. To Dionysia !

PHOSPHOROS. To Eternal Life !

(*They drain the cups at the same moment. At once Cleonice reels and falls into Phosphoros's arms, with her head thrown back.*)

PHOSPHOROS. Cleonice ! Do not go without me ! . . . Your wide eyes fixed upon empty space, Oh what do they see ?

CLEONICE. Ah ! This journey from world to world . . . with you ! . . . I see . . . I see the Cross of Christ shining through the Star of my Lucifer !

(*Both sink on to the steps of the altar.*)

CLEONICE. The sign ! . . . (*Her head falls forward.*)

PHOSPHOROS. The fulfilment !

(*They die.*)

SCENE VI

HERAKLIDOS *and the* BISHOP, *followed by a* CENTURION *and a* TROOP OF LEGIONARIES.

HERAKLIDOS (*entering from the right and noticing the bodies lying on the altar steps*). The holocaust !

CENTURION. They are dead !

BISHOP. They are brought low !

HERAKLIDOS. They are victorious ! For they have loved and struggled to the end. Blessed are those who have believed in their dream : they will possess it.

BISHOP. The wind of the desert will sweep away their ashes and God will erase their names from the memory of men.

HERAKLIDOS. The Temple will preserve their tomb.

From the depth of these holy solitudes, their high love will shine out upon mankind like a torch of the free city !

BISHOP. Take up these two corpses and drag them to the gibbet before the populace of Dionysia ! And then we shall return to throw down this Temple from top to bottom, as we have done with the Temple of Dionysos !

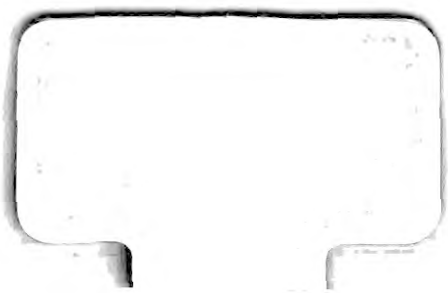
HERAKLIDOS. Take care ! Keep your profane hands from those bodies scantified by the holocaust of Love ! Beware of touching my sceptre with your crozier. This Temple is not one of those which you can shake. . . . Beware of the God Whom you know not !

BISHOP (*to the hesitating legionaries*). Seize those corpses.

(*Just as the legionaries draw near, the flaming Star appears above the lovers. At its core gleams a fiery Cross. At the same moment a flame rises from the altar beneath which the bodies lie clasped. The legionaries draw back in alarm and fall on their knees.*)

BISHOP (*drawing back a step, terrified*). What is that ? (*He drops his crozier.*)

HERAKLIDOS. That is the Sign of the Times to come—the Cross of Christ upon the Star of Lucifer ! How it burns, the fiery Cross at the core of the flaming Star ! Thus these two transfigured souls are fused into flame in the infinite. By their sacrifice, Heroic Love has regained divine Wisdom ; the Rebel Angel has found again his lost Star. And now, Bishop, in the name of the Almighty who has manifested Himself here, take up your crozier and go tell your people what you have seen in the Temple of Truth. . . . True heroes will come here to kindle their torches, for from the

children of Lucifer has come forth an inextinguishable flame !

(*Heraklidos extends his sceptre over the dead couple lying under the flame on the altar ; the Bishop stands petrified, the legionaries remain kneeling, and the curtain falls on the flaming vision of the Star and the Cross.*)